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BY

F. W. DRAKE

PRIEST-IN-CHARGE OF S. JOHN'S CHURCH, WILTON ROAD, S.W.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

THE BISHOP OF LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book differs from the other volumes for Lenten study to which I have written introductions, as it has a more direct and special application to the holy season of Lent. It consists of a series of beautiful meditations upon that most moving of all subjects—the Wondrous Passion of our Lord.

I feel certain that many Christians who in theory believe the Christian story have very little idea of the tremendous and wondrous fact in which they say they believe.

If we think, not for a moment, but for several minutes, again and again, upon who God is, how He holds at every moment twenty million blazing suns in the hollow of His Hand, that without Him nothing whatever could exist for a day, then we begin faintly to picture the wonder of a *Suffering God*, that He allowed Himself to be at the mercy of His own creatures, and saved the world not by Power, but by Endurance. Then every incident of the Wondrous Passion becomes fraught with interest and deep with meaning, and it is impossible too much in detail to meditate upon the wonderful story.

This the writer of this book helps us to do. He says so truly—

"The rest of Bethany is what we need to-day. It

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is so easy to be carried along the ceaseless stream of perpetual activities. The duties of life are so insistent. The work of the day is so absorbing; the stress of business is so great. We are so easily persuaded that there can be no time for devotion, no room for rest, no leisure for thought. So day follows day in one long round of busy activity, life becomes a mechanical routine and weariness falls upon the soul, till it needs a supreme effort of will to think of spiritual things at all. Rest needs faith. It is so hard to believe that the few quiet minutes painfully secured for prayer and remembrance of God will really lighten the labours of the day and enrich the powers of life. It needs great concentration of will to shut out the anxieties of work, and to rest calmly in the realized presence of Christ. But this spiritual rest, this habit of daily retreat, is the only condition of effective and enduring work. Life becomes so mean, so sordid, so stifling, when there is no space saved for the restful things of God. We need to have heaven poured into this shut house of life, that our activities may be braced to their full vigour, that a spirit of thoroughness may animate our work."

And he helps us to use those quiet moments, when we have secured them, fruitfully.

Step by step we are led through the stages of the Wondrous Passion. This book should be read slowly, and only in small portions at a time, and, if possible, on our knees.

The writer says so truly—

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"The vision of sin which Gethsemane reveals is very different from this. Sin is not an error, not just an imperfection, not a natural stage in a long process of good, not merely an offence against social well-being, but a self-determined movement of the will against God Himself, a rebellion, a desertion, a grave perversion of holiness, the most deplorable of all evils, the negation of truth, a retrograde movement in human life. "Against Thee only have I sinned." No sin is an injury to man alone. It touches the Heart of God first. Such is my own sin for which Jesus suffered. Have I seen it, as He sees it? It is not merely that I have misused the powers that God has given me, and marred the bright ideal of a fruitful life, which God in His love had planned. It is not only that the effects of sin abide in my life to-day, marks of a broken progress, an unfinished development. But the sinfulness of sin lies in the personal rejection of the loving and holy God, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier. If I cannot see my sin in itself to be so loathly and gross a thing, at least I can see the awfulness of it reflected in the agony of the Soul of Christ in Gethsemane. I can pray that the spirit of the great penitence of the Sinless One may be mine in my sinfulness. The horror of that agony was touched by the natural shrinking of the perfect Man from the unnatural issue of death. But the pain that truly racked His Sacred Heart and broke the strength of that Sinless Body was the vision of sin in its abysmal awfulness and doom."

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It is this sense of sin which the Wondrous Passion alone can produce, and it is the first essential to a due appreciation of a story of salvation.

The ordinary man does not "worry about his sins," and does not therefore feel he needs a Saviour.

But once let him realize what it *cost* the Man of God to take away the sin of the world, and he begins to realize what sin really is, and to look at it from God's point of view.

It is not morbidness, not scrupulosity, not mawkish sentiment which is aimed at, but a frank acknowledgment of facts in their true light, as they will be seen at the Judgment Day.

I commend, then, this book to my people, as a help to their meditations during the coming Lent, and shall pray that it may help us all—for we *all* need it—to have a deeper sense of what is meant by the Wondrous Passion.

A. F. LONDON.

LONDON HOUSE,
Christmas, 1912.

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I

THE OPPORTUNITY OF LENT

S. LUKE xviii. 35-43.

"JESUS of Nazareth passeth by." How readily these words call to mind the incident which marked Christ's journey through the rich frontier city of Judah on His way to Jerusalem for the Passover. The scene rises before our eyes—the populace beginning to be astir with preparations for the festival—the Prophet of Nazareth acclaimed by the multitude as He took His way among the pilgrim throng—the blind man by the wayside moved by the unaccustomed murmur of the crowd—the glad, hurried answer flung by the people to his eager question—the importunate appeal of the beggar, undaunted by the rebuke of the zealous followers of the Prophet—the sudden halt of Jesus as He commanded the sufferer to be brought to Him—the simple question that probed the sincerity of the man, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" —the ready answer, "Lord, that I may receive my sight"—the waking of those dim eyes to the new vision of the light—the glad discipleship—the praise of the multitude. We see it all.

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And when the story comes before us in the Gospel for the last Sunday before Lent, we understand at once its application to the days upon which we are entering. This Lent Jesus comes amongst us, acclaimed by many a disciple. We hear the stirring of the crowd that throngs Him. The hope of vision for our blinded sight rouses us to importunity. "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Jesus tests our sincerity, and accepting our simple faith bestows on us the blessing that we crave. We follow Him. And not only we ourselves, but others too, moved by the wonder of His power, give praise to God. Thus in this miracle we see a parable of Lent.

A.

The experience of other years shows, that if we are to use the opportunities of this season to the full, we must enter upon it with deliberate faith and with great hope. We must be ready, at the very beginning of Lent, to accustom ourselves to certain definite restraints, in order that presently a wider and a fuller life may be ours. One such restraint is that which is proposed in this book—regular, definite meditation. Meditation *is* a restraint. It means preparation and system and plan to make room for the needed time each day. It means concentration of thought. It means careful recollection. Such restraint will only be possible, if we really believe it to be worth while. We shall not always feel it so. We must renew our faith as each day comes, being ready to walk

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continually by faith and not by sight. We must trust ourselves very fully to the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The subject of meditation is the wondrous Passion of Jesus Christ. This opens to us the very Heart of God. No words can ever take the place of the simple, dignified narratives of the Passion which the Gospels give. How near they bring us to the suffering, victorious Christ! Here, if ever, we realise that meditation is never an end in itself, but always a way into the Presence, an approach to Jesus Himself. Meditation means companionship with Jesus. And companionship has claims. It may mean vision. It must mean discipline. As we meditate upon the Passion, Jesus may open to us new and uplifting visions of God in the beauty of His Holiness and His Love. But whether, or no, such high vision be for us yet, Jesus will certainly call us by His Passion to make new surrender in penitence and hope. In penitence, because we see the meaning of our sin. In hope, because we realise the unsearchable benefits of His Passion.

Are we ready for that surrender? We know the hindrances of old. There is the poverty of our spiritual vision, the hesitancy of our faith. There are the pressing claims of daily duties, so insistent, so exacting, that our energies are absorbed in the bare necessities of work. Tired in body, wearied in mind, we have so little leisure to cultivate that knowledge of God, which alone can give our spirits true rest, helping

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us to grow in that full self-surrender, which is at once the happiness and the strength of life. But the hope of a fuller obedience never dies, the desire for closer fellowship never falters. Year by year Lent comes as a welcome opportunity to revive these hopes, to renew this fellowship. Lent is never a mere repetition. There is no repetition with God. Lent is always a fresh revelation. It is a new coming of Jesus to the soul. We must begin Lent with a real conviction that it is Jesus, the strong Son of God, the Giver of Light, the Healer and Lover of Souls, Who will accept our new surrender, Who will bless with new gifts of grace our sincere efforts of new obedience, Who will reveal Himself in new ways and gird us with new strength. God has for every one that overcometh "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." For each of us God holds in store an individual revelation of Himself, a new disclosure of deep needs of the soul, which He alone can satisfy. He will discover to us new joys, new powers of service. He will lead us to new intimacies of fellowship, He will disclose new visions and reveal new duties.

This is the high faith with which we move out to the opportunities of Lent. We may have failed in former years. We may have lost all vision now. We may be struggling with sins, which for many years have held us in fast bondage. We may have ceased to struggle. We may have lost the spirit of prayer. We may find formality, hypocrisy, and self-

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deceit creeping into the most sacred acts of our devotion. But here is God, calling us anew, waiting to make new surrender possible, to kindle new hopes, to give new life. "Behold, I make all things new."

Make an act of hope.

O my God, I hope in Thee, to strengthen me, to comfort me, to help me in all my troubles, to forgive me all my sin, to bring me at last to Thee in Heaven, for Thou art my hope, my strength, and my exceeding great reward. O my God, I hope in Thee alone to teach me, to guide me, to rule my will, to hallow my life, to bless me in all my work. O Lord, in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded.

B.

The life itself is ever new, but the methods of discipline are old. There are no short cuts to holiness.

The effort of Lent is the epitome of the effort of life. The true aims which give motive to our daily life are revealed and reinforced. Bishop Westcott has said that part of the great ideal of every man must be "to make of life one harmonious whole." That effort after harmonious and concordant unity in the life is one of the chief endeavours of Lent. We seek to subdue the warring passions of the soul, to harmonise the conflicting impulses of the heart, to unify the manifold purposes of the will, to bring all into surrender to Christ. This is the end of all our discipline. We must learn such self-mastery that we can direct all our energies without distraction upon the one work of life—obedience to Christ in the vocation to which He has called us. We shall pray for a clear understanding

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of that vocation. And when the purpose of God has been made known to us, we shall strive to draw together all the scattered forces of our life and combine them in one masterly scheme of obedience and discipline. It may be no new ideal, no fresh vocation. Often already we may have held it before us in moments of prayer and vision. But now it comes with new urgency. It shines more clearly. It appeals more strongly. It seems more possible. Looking round upon our life under the fresh impulse of this ideal, we can see where our surrender fails, where the presence of mixed motives and divided aims has spoilt the harmony of the powers of life. This is where our efforts will be concentrated. We shall clearly determine what we have to do before we try to do it. We believe that Lent has a purpose. Let us make the purpose very definite. We must set ourselves a very clear task, quickening and deepening our surrender in ways that are definite, practical, and wise. There is no need to attempt an impossible task, no need to be impatient. The more definite our self-knowledge, the more steadily, the more quietly can we order our self-discipline. *One* fault overcome, *one* duty more perfectly fulfilled, *one* new obedience, may well be sufficient fruit of Lent, and help to make life one harmonious whole in Christ.

Pray for insight.

O Lord Jesus, Who art the Light of the World, perfect in holiness, eternally Love, grant that I may know and love Thee better. Draw me nearer to Thyself. Pour into my soul the

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light of Thy Holy Spirit that I may see my sins. Give me true repentance, and quicken me in heart and will, that I may ardently desire and steadfastly seek all that is holy and good, for Thy sake, Who hast died upon the Cross for me.

C.

All the efforts that we make are brought to success through a power which is not our own. Perseverance is no natural faculty in human life. It needs the grace of God. It is the gift of the Spirit. So the harmony of life will only be achieved with the aid of God. Lent enables us to realise more effectually this invisible background of life. It is God Who holds before our eyes the vision of life. It is God also Who enables us to fulfil the vision. We need a fuller realisation of the nearness of God. We want to believe more courageously in the power of the Invisible. We must live as those whose "citizenship is in Heaven." Lent is the time when we can strengthen our ties with the eternal. We can make the emergence of the spiritual more continuous in our daily life. This is the discipline of our devotion.

To gain anew this sense of the Invisible we need rest—the rest of quiet meditation, the continued contemplation of what the obedience and suffering and death of Jesus really mean to us to-day. We rest indeed in His finished work. It is by the direction of our minds upon the significance of Calvary that we realise how it is possible, in the midst of so much sorrow and failure and sin, to find rest for our souls at all. Our moments of prayer and meditation and

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Bible-study are our moments of rest. We would make more room in our lives for such quiet times. We would increase their frequency, if we cannot lengthen their duration. We need more rest, not more activity. It is not difficult to increase our activities, to run here and there for spiritual help, to undertake fresh service, to develop new social energies. But what we need most is to sit still and think more, to kneel on and to pray more. It is thus that Heaven will break through upon us in our daily life.

After rest comes service. Lent will offer new ways of service. The loving heart, touched with the sacrifice of Christ, will find manifold ministries in which to express its own gratitude and sense of fellowship. The vision of God once gained is intensified through generous service. The soul does not remain in selfish isolation upon the Mount of Vision, but every new power of goodness is developed in activities of loving ministry. Personality is enriched by intimate intercourse and closer fellowship. The soul realises itself through its relation to others, and realises itself truly when it has first established a right relation with God. The home, the workshop, the school, the office—these are the scenes of self-realisation. They will offer new opportunities. God may not give us new scenes of work, but He will ask us to bring a new spirit into the old familiar scenes—a spirit of unselfish tenderness, of considerate love, of gracious sympathy, of patient endurance. The danger is that the earnest care which we bestow upon ourselves in Lent may make us

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reserved and estranged from others, forgetful of our social duties. We must be careful that at a time when we try to be nearest God, men shall find us bright and unselfish, sympathetic and quick of response. Our attitude to others is the one criterion which the world possesses of the worth of our religion. Pragmatism is the spirit of the age. Things are judged by their immediate utility, their effective result. We shall be ready, then, to adorn the doctrine of Christ our Saviour in all things, and to commend our faith to all men by the very beauty and attractiveness of our daily life.

Penitence will grow as we realise the Invisible this Lent. For penitence feeds upon the vision of the Crucified. The Passion of Christ is the fount of man's penitence. It is the loving look of the suffering Christ that works godly sorrow in the human heart. In Lent we gaze upon the Face of Christ, and pray that His love may work mightily upon our souls. Stirred by the love of God, we ask the aid of the Holy Ghost, that we may be convicted of sin and may be able to assert in our lives the divine law of holiness. Confident in our contrition we humbly seek the absolution of God. God purifies us by His forgiveness and purges us afresh through the very discipline of the forgiven life. All the varied experiences of the pardoned soul prove fresh channels of purification. "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His Face." Service will lead to new vision. Vision will deepen penitence. Penitence will consecrate service.

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And so the soul mounts continually nearer God. As thus we work for objects of the moment with a purpose that reaches eternity, and offer to our fellows the ministry of a love, which is drawn out of the fulness of the Eternal Love of God Himself, we are journeying steadfastly along the way of holiness, pilgrims of the Passion and the Cross.

Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit.

Blessed Spirit, Fount of Wisdom, grant to me such a vision of God that I may steadfastly endure as seeing Him Who is invisible, that rising above what is seen and temporal I may enjoy that which is unseen and eternal. Grant that with a pure heart fervently I may love all that is holy, and with a ready mind learn that which is heavenly, and may walk warily among the things of this world, as one who looks for the City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

D.

There is one more sphere of our Lenten discipline, in which we epitomise the ideal of our earthly life. If, to quote Bishop Westcott again, "to anticipate the transfiguring majesty of the Presence of God" is part of the ideal of life, this is especially the effort of Lent. For this is the very life of grace. The Altar is for us the Mount of Transfiguration. There we behold the Presence of God. There is the transfiguring vision of the Incarnate God. The world has no such vision. But to the eye of faith there is no splendour on earth so great as this, no mystery so glorious, no vision so compelling. Lent calls us to enter more fully into the intimacies of the sacramental life. We withhold

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ourselves, because we fear the demands which the higher rule of life must make upon our wills. We hesitate to surrender, lest God should claim more than we are ready to give. We draw back, because we have not felt the attraction, have not believed the happiness, nor realised the transfiguring power of a fuller sacramental life. Now we are called to a more frequent attendance at the Altar, that the Presence of God may shed its glory upon our daily path. Other ways there are, no doubt, of realising God's Presence, but here at the Altar is the supreme and sovereign realisation of God in human life. Here we plead the One Offering of the Incarnate Son of God. Here He comes in the fulness of His Sacred Humanity and His Eternal Deity, not merely that we may worship, not only that we may plead, but that He may dwell in us and we in Him. Here, then, we shall begin, if we seek to realise more fully the transfiguring majesty of God. Each Eucharist is a foretaste of heavenly splendour. Meditation prepares us to enter into its meaning. Prayer finds its fullest expression here. For this we discipline and train our souls, that the Lord, when He comes, may find in us a dwelling-place prepared more worthily for His abiding. And to the soul thus bearing Christ within, every scene of sorrow or of joy, every task and every duty, will glow afresh with the beauty of God's Presence. The effort of self-conquest, the agony of penitence, the prolonged struggle with sin, will be touched with an uplifting sense of joy in the knowledge that the Sacred Heart of the Redeemer thrills

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with a new happiness, as He lifts us nearer to Himself. To live consciously in His Presence is to live in the spirit of victory. Such triumph, such joy will be with us through all the long efforts of Lent. We realise more truly the meaning of the Passion. We recognise the hardness of the Cross. We know its weight, we feel its burden. But where the Cross is, there is the Crucified. And where Jesus is, there is victory.

May such a victory be ours this Lent, through the mercy and grace of God, that we may bring to Him at Eastertide the acceptable offering of hearts, cleansed by the Precious Blood, newly responsive to the vital energies of the Holy Spirit, surrendered in every thought to God, conformed to His Holy Will, homes of the Risen Christ.

Make an act of self-surrender.

O my God, I am not my own, but Thine. Take me for Thine own. I give myself to Thee, for joy, for sorrow, for sickness, for health, for life, for death, for time and for eternity. Make me and keep me Thine own, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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II

THE APPROACH TO THE PASSION

S. LUKE ix. 18–36; S. MARK x. 32–34; S. JOHN viii. 46–59.

"IN the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross is joy of spirit, in the Cross is the sum of virtue, in the Cross is perfection of holiness." These words, from the memorable chapter of Thomas à Kempis on the Royal Way of the Holy Cross, present in language of great beauty and profound truth the response of the disciple to the appeal of the Cross. To be able to see the Cross in such a light is to have entered deeply into the meaning of the Passion of Christ, and to have learnt something of its unsearchable benefits. For Thomas à Kempis such words are the fruit of many years of close communion with God. He speaks with the simplicity of assured conviction. Weak, faltering and feeble as our own spiritual experience may be, we can claim his words to express the truth towards which we are moving, which we ourselves shall one day verify.

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A.

Marvellous to us always must be our Lord's passionate desire of the Cross. From the days of His boyhood, when, as a modern painter has so beautifully depicted, the shadow of the Cross lay already upon His daily obedience and His homely perfection, all through the years of His human development, that vehement desire of the Passion increased. He had a baptism to be baptised with. His soul was straitened "until it be accomplished." Yet, until His hour was fully come, He waited upon the Father's Will. For love of us He longed for the Cross, that our redemption might be quickly wrought. For love of us He waited, that by His life and work we might learn the true dignity of Him who suffered for our sake. For the honour and glory of the Father, He longed for the Cross, that the Divine purpose of love might be fulfilled. For the honour and glory of the Father He waited, that by His life and words the holiness and love of God might be revealed.

And ever with the foreknowledge of the agony there went the vision of the fruitfulness of the Cross. Down the long avenues of time His eye saw all the graces, all the virtues, all the benedictions with which the Cross should fructify our human nature. Before His timeless gaze there lay spread out in gladdening vision all the triumphs and heroisms of human life which yet should spring up in the pathway of the Cross.

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Pray for a deeper belief in the fruitfulness of the Passion.

O Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who for the joy that was set before Thee didst endure the Cross, despising the shame, grant to me such faith in the unsearchable benefits of Thy Passion, that I may readily accept the way of the Cross as the way of true happiness, and may rejoice to be made partaker of Thy sufferings, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

B.

There are stages which we can reverently trace in our Lord's acceptance of the Passion. From the first, the Passion was implied and involved in the humiliation of the human birth. The "emptying" of the Incarnation, the being "found in fashion as a man" meant that He must be "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." There is no resting-place between the Cradle of Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary. But there were moments when Jesus revealed to His disciples the urgency of the Passion, moments when to His own human Soul the Cross stood more brightly revealed as the glorious crisis of His mission.

Doubtless, when at the age of twelve He stood for the first time in the Temple at Jerusalem, the solemn dedication of Himself to the Father's Will was an anticipation of future suffering willingly accepted, while for His Blessed Mother the sorrow of the three days' separation was a foretaste of that agony of desolation with which the Ministry and the Cross were to pierce her loving heart. First of all others

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the Virgin Mother was swept into the current of the Passion. Not even the restraining hands of blessed human motherhood might withhold Him from the stern necessities of His redemptive work.

And when the public ministry began, there was the mysterious prelude of the Temptation. With all the powers of His true human will, inspired by the fulness of the Holy Spirit, Jesus unflinchingly accepted the way of Holiness, knowing that it was the way of the Cross, rejecting all compromises with evil, resolutely refusing all escape from the Passion. As Christ came unscathed from the searching trial of the Temptation, the final victory of Holiness was assured. But it had yet to be interpreted. That was the work of the Ministry. Jesus would communicate to the disciples His own passion for the Cross. The mystery was hid from the eyes of the Galileans, the Jews of Jerusalem could set no value on the Cross. Surely the disciples might sympathise and understand. To that end Christ withdrew them for a while from the activities of the Galilean ministry and called them apart. Two things were required before the Passion could have any meaning or any hope for them. They must recognise clearly Who He is, God eternal. And they must realise that the Cross is the fulfilment of the Divine Will, as already expressed in that very revelation of the prophets upon which their hopes were built.

Here lay the significance of the confession of S. Peter and of the Transfiguration which followed.

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When Jesus took the disciples apart in that last year of His ministry, He sought to lay deep in their hearts the foundation of more spiritual teaching. He called them away from the multitude to reflect calmly and without distraction on all that they had seen and heard, to examine their own experience, to deal faithfully with all they had learned of Him in the intimacies of daily intercourse. Before His own eyes clearly lay the Passion. It could not yet be before the eyes of His disciples. There was needed some more worthy conception of His Person. While they could see no more in Him than the perfection of ordinary manhood, such truths as the Passion, the Resurrection and the Ascension must be wholly beyond their understanding. They could see no further than the fruitless finality of death. In the confession of S. Peter, therefore, with its rejection of the popular verdict as inadequate and its acceptance of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," there lay boundless possibilities for the future. For this acknowledgment Jesus had been waiting. It must be the prelude of any further revelation. His aim was to build upon that confession, to drive home the meaning of it, to change it from a momentary flash of extraordinary insight into the living and abiding conviction of daily belief, to give it a permanence which should not be shaken, and in the power of that growing assurance to accustom the disciples to face the mysteries of the Passion.

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C.

It was natural, then, that the confession should be followed immediately by the prediction of the Passion. But S. Peter had not yet realised all that his new faith involved. The announcement of the Passion was received with indignant repudiation. Jesus met the hesitation of the disciples with the glory of the Transfiguration. By the Transfiguration He sought to establish the faith of the bewildered disciples, just where it lacked definite assurance, and to prepare their minds for a better understanding of the Passion. For the Transfiguration was Christ's acceptance of the Cross. It was the occasion of renewed self-oblation, a fresh step forward on the way of sacrifice. Steadfastly out of the very fulness of His incarnate glory Jesus looked at the way of suffering, and in the very moment of liberty and strength gave Himself willingly to die. The disciples could not yet understand this revelation of the Passion, but they heard Moses and Elijah speaking of the "decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem," and dimly they might comprehend that in some way the sanction and seal of both Law and Prophets rested upon the suffering of the Messiah. And other testimony, too, was added. No sooner had the Passion been acclaimed by the leaders of the faith of Israel as the fulfilment of all Jewish hope, than there fell upon the disciples' ears the approving voice of the Father Himself from heaven, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him." It

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was the Son of God Who went forth to accept the death of the Cross. Thus the Transfiguration proved a moment of crisis in our Lord's proclamation of the Passion. It attested His Deity, it asserted the willingness of His surrender, it approved the Passion as the fulfilment of the nation's hope.

And it is well for us, as we enter upon the study of the Passion, to take great pains to realise Who it is that suffers. It is God. It is this which gives worth and dignity and awe to each detail of the Passion. We see the Eternal God submitting Himself for love of us to the indignity and horror of the Cross, accepting each fresh humiliation, welcoming each added suffering that we in Him might be loosed from the burden of our sins.

As the last days drew on, Jesus made a fresh disclosure of His Deity in the very face of His bitterest foes, "Before Abraham was, I am." The novelty, the strangeness, the marvel of it might well blind the eyes alike of disciples and persecutors then. But now the truth stands out before us, illumined with the light of the Resurrection, verified by the shining witness of many centuries of Christian experience. Jesus is God. It is His Deity which gives transcendent value and atoning power to the Passion and Death, by which we are saved.

Make an act of faith in the Deity of the Suffering Redeemer.

Jesus, Redeemer and Lover of my soul, I believe that Thou art true God and true Man. I believe that in love for us men Thou didst veil the glory of Thy Deity, and, born of

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the Virgin Mary, wast found in fashion as a man. I believe that, in the perfection of Thy Incarnate Godhead, Thou didst accept the sufferings of the Passion and endure the agony of the Cross. In Thee I behold my suffering God, in all the pains of Thy Passion meriting for me salvation, winning for me forgiveness. Son of God, I believe that Thou hast loved me and given Thyself for me. Teach me to worship Thee in the humiliation of Thy suffering, and to follow Thee my God in the way of the Cross, that, dying to the world, I may live only unto Thee.

D.

As the hour of Christ's Passion approached, the urgency of His desire for the Cross increased. "And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem. And Jesus was going before them and they were amazed, and they that followed Him were afraid." There is no haste in the movement of Christ. There is no shrinking, no delay. With steadfast, resolute acceptance, Jesus fulfils each day the Will of the Father. He has waited while word and look and deed have proclaimed the Love of God. He has waited while hatred, indifference and sin have closed men's hearts to the appeal of the Divine Holiness. Now the time of waiting is over. He sets His Face as a flint towards Jerusalem. For Him there is no ignorance of the issue. Even the disciples stand awed at the danger, amazed at His courage. Affection and loyalty bid them follow, but they follow in fear. That perfect love has not yet been born in them, which casteth out fear. The torment of fear is upon them. But they follow. And fearlessly He goes before.

It is thus that Jesus calls us to-day to go forward

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to accept suffering. Ever He goes before. We are not alone. He takes us with Him. In His Heart there is the joy of victory, the vision of the fruitfulness of the Passion. He would communicate that joy to us and share with us the inspiration of that vision. We may not know all that lies before us of suffering, of sorrow and of pain. But He knows. And still He urges forward. Failure, loneliness, bereavement, poverty, sickness, infirmity, who can say what the way of the Passion will be? But if it be companionship with Jesus, who shall say that it does not bring its own mysterious happiness? It is the way of fellowship with the saints, of communion with Christ, the way of conquest, the way of love.

Contemplate suffering as the way of fellowship with God in Christ.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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III

THE VISITATION OF LOVE

S. Luke xix. 41-48; S. Mark xi. 1-11.

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace." "Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." The coming of Jesus to Jerusalem is the last appeal of love. His lament over the city is the lament of love, which sees the visitation of peace rejected and the judgment of destroying war invoked. The purifying of the Temple on the day after the triumphal entry is the visitation of love revealed as holiness. The daily teaching in the temple is the public justification of love's way of holiness and sacrifice.

A.

The resolute purpose of Jesus in going up to Jerusalem was at length fulfilled in the solemn entry at the beginning of Passover week, so unexpectedly made an occasion of triumph by the enthusiasm of the crowds who were coming up to the Feast. A triumph it seemed to them, tragedy though it was to Him. He knew it to be the rejection of the loving

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appeal of God. In His lament over the city is all the agony of a love, baffled in its hope, yet confirmed in its purpose of sacrifice. That is the way of God's Love. It is ever a love of sacrifice, which loves, as it were, of necessity, because it must. It is love which no rebuff can hinder, which seeks until it finds, and when it finds, looks for no gratitude, expects no reward. Such is the Love of God. The history of man is the story of God's infinite Love, gradually seeking fuller and more wonderful expression. For the fellowship of that Love man was made—the crown of creation, capable of a free and loving response. But man fell away from his opportunity of glory. Man might fail, but God's Love never faltered. There could be no check in the long pursuit of the Divine Love. The very story of the Jewish people revealed the tireless persistence of that Love. No sin could weary, no waywardness tire, no failure thwart the eternal hopefulness of that Love. It was Love that set His choice upon faithful Abraham, Love that disciplined the Hebrews in the bondage of Egypt and rescued them from the hand of Pharaoh. Love gave them the law from Sinai and schooled them under Moses in the wilderness. Love suffered their repeated rebellion in the promised land, and wooed them in the very moment of their rejection. Prophecy was the voice of Love, appealing, counselling, warning, judging. And when the whole nation was sunk in apostasy, Love drove them forth into the captivity of Babylon, that through the discipline of affliction a remnant might be saved.

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In all their affliction Love was afflicted and the angel of His presence saved them. "In His love and in His pity He redeemed them and carried them all the days of old."

And now, in the fulness of time, Love had come unto His home and His own received Him not. God had stooped to the lowliness of human life, and here Love Incarnate was weeping over the City which had driven Him from its gates. Three years of faithful witness, three years of gracious ministry, three years of sinless perfection had failed to touch the heart of a nation, so far estranged from the God of its hope. Gazing down from the hillside upon the self-doomed city, "the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth," Love wept. But even while He sorrowed for the hardened heart of His chosen people, Love had found the way of victory. Love, which had ransacked the infinite resources of God to meet the sinfulness of man, pursued anew the way of sacrifice. Love would accept the Passion. Jesus wept. The Heart of the Eternal grieved for man's rejection of His Love. He foresaw all the horrors that sin must bring upon the sinful, and wept tears of human sympathy for the suffering that must be. The fall of Jerusalem with all its savage terrors was a symbol of the pains of judgment, which sinful humanity recklessly drew down upon its head. Jesus wept for the suffering of the innocent, involved in this wanton sin of rejection. "Your house is left unto you desolate." This is the vision that brings tears to the Eyes

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of the Redeemer. This is the sorrow of Divine Love, foiled in its hope of immediate salvation, yet moving steadfastly on towards the Cross.

It is the patience of this Love of God that bewilders us to-day. It is Love itself which seems to expose the ways of God to human misunderstanding. It is this excess of God's Love, no doubt, which troubles us. It passes our own feeble experience of love. We have no terms in which to express it. It seems too good to be true. We draw back in wistful hesitation. Can we really accept the Love which goes forth stedfastly to sacrifice, sorrowing for man's sin, yet resolved on conquest through suffering? It is a love which passes our understanding. Yet our difficulties spring from expecting to comprehend all and refusing to go forward till we do fully understand. Laboriously we seek to understand the ways of God's Love, when what we need first of all is an act of simple faith in the fact that the Divine Love does indeed pass the limits of our understanding. It is but wasted time in this life to make faith wait upon full understanding. We want more love. We ask questions, not because we really doubt, but because we do not love enough. Let love come to the full, then knowledge can wait, for love is found to be more than knowledge and to give deeper insight than understanding.

So the wonder of God's Love is ever about us. Each life has its own story of the pursuit of the Divine Love. The sin of Jerusalem was that it did not

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recognise Love when Love dwelt Incarnate in its midst. Let us recognise Love in our lives to-day and raise our daily thanksgivings for the manifold gifts of God's Love. They are the gifts which surround us now—all the intimate evidences of Christ's Presence and God's mercy, the miracles of grace which make this life already heaven—the Holy Indwelling, the Divine Forgiveness, the Eucharistic Gift. Here and now these gifts of eternal life are ours. Let us know in this our day the things that belong unto our peace. Let us not neglect the time of Love's visitation.

Contemplate the Sorrow of Jesus.

Picture the story of the Jews' agelong rejection, as it lay before the mind of Christ. Recall the evidences of love which Jesus had shown in Jerusalem—the miracles, the clear and simple teaching, the perfect example of His flawless life. Think of the vision which Jesus had of Jerusalem, as it might be, purified, redeemed, glorious in holiness, the City of Peace. Think of your own life as Jesus sees it. Think of His sorrow at the repeated rejection of His love. Think of His sorrow for the suffering which you are wantonly bringing upon yourself and upon others by wilful sin. Think of the vision of your life as it might be, the ideal which exists in the mind of the Divine Love. Enter into the sorrow of Christ, and let penitence have its perfect work, that you may live a life of holy love.

B.

Jesus wept for the sins of men and went forward on the way of salvation. As the pilgrim procession dipped down into the Valley of Kedron, the Holy City seemed to tower in glory above the approaching worshippers. Before them rose the white beauty of

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the Temple, terrace upon terrace, resting upon the massive rock, flanked by shining walls of marble, glittering with minarets of gold, a very Mount of God. So Jesus rode along the pilgrim way and entered the City by the Eastern Gate. Hemmed in by thronging crowds He sought at once His Father's House. He was no stranger to its courts. Festival after festival had found Him here. Here the people had learned to look for Him and had wondered if He had not come. Here they had welcomed Him and hung upon His words. Here too His enemies knew that they might find Him. Here they sent their emissaries, and hoped to entangle Him in His talk. Even so it is always. Jesus is not hid. In known and definite ways He comes to us and shows Himself where friend and foe alike may find Him.

But never before had the welcome of the people been so enthusiastic. They had found Him in the Temple, they had looked for His coming, they had watched His arrival. Never before had He been led in triumph to its courts. It may well be that the people of Jerusalem looked at first with wonder at the excitement of the Passover throng, as the loud Hosannas echoed through the narrow streets. But even they could not be unmoved by the splendid enthusiasm of the hour, and it was a united and expectant multitude, worshippers from province and capital and country alike, that ushered the great Prophet with triumph into the precincts of the Temple.

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"And Jesus entered into Jerusalem and into the Temple. And when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out into Bethany with the twelve." And on the morrow they came to Jerusalem. "And Jesus went into the Temple and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the Temple." The day of triumph after all was not the day of revelation. Jesus waited till the morrow to make His final vindication of the Holiness of God by the purifying of His Father's "House of prayer." When the expectation of the people had been roused to its highest, with calm and solemn deliberation, Jesus revealed the spiritual nature of His Mission by the cleansing of the Temple.

Moments of popular enthusiasm become moments of individual opportunity, and are used by God as occasions of Divine revelation. The revelation will not always be a new one. It may be the repetition of an old message in new surroundings. In the novelty of the conditions may lie the strength of the fresh appeal, to which the patience of the Divine Love condescends. Jesus had no new message to deliver when He stood once more in the Temple. It was no new scene that met His eyes, as He gazed upon the unholy traffic of the merchants, making their avaricious bargains in the courts that had been hallowed to prayer. Here two years before, in this very spot, coming fresh from the Baptism of John and the conquest of Satan in the wilderness, He had attested His Divine mission by the expulsion of these

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very traders from the Temple. This had been His first public witness, the first open revelation of His claims, the first vindication of the Divine Holiness, the first challenge of the powers of evil among His own people whom He had come to save. Here in the place which God had chosen "to put His Name there," Jesus had first proclaimed Himself, and with the forceful emphasis of a symbolic action which could not fail to be understood, had asserted the inviolable Holiness of God. For the moment the Temple courts had been cleared. The leaders of the nation had been startled by the unexpected violence of His action. But the unhallowed abuse which years of ready toleration had established, it needed more than the surprise of one day to destroy. The traffic had been resumed. The religious leaders had settled down to a tedious and hesitating policy of enquiry and subtle opposition to the new Teacher. Jesus had not shunned the issue which He had raised. S. John, prompted doubtless by the vivid memories of many a sharp encounter and many a bold utterance of the Master, reveals how frequent, how persistent, how unmistakeable in its clearness was the witness which Jesus gave of Himself at Jerusalem. That first emphatic action was symbolic of His whole mission. He came to reveal the Father. In the very place which the Father had chosen as the centre of His revelation, Jesus found the ideals of holiness obscured by petty tradition, darkened by avarice and corruption, confused by mistaken hopes of national freedom. Before revelation could be possible,

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there must be purification, reform, the renunciation of evil. Sin must be removed before the ideals of holiness can be understood. Jesus must reveal Himself as the Sin-bearer. This was the significance of the new purification of the Temple. Jesus at once denounced sin and offered Himself as the Sacrifice for sin. The issue raised afresh in the midst of popular enthusiasm at this Festival must lead to His death. In no other way in the face of persistent blindness and wilful perversion can the Holiness of Divine Love be vindicated.

C.

It is not hard to realise the essential relation of Holiness to Love in the Being of God, when we look at true human love. It is of the essence of love in man, that it is the assertion of the full dignity and highest worth of which we are capable. Holiness is the honour of love. Love purifies. Love reveals the best, the holiest that is in us. Whenever that ideal of holiness is degraded or demeaned, wherever the purity of love's offering becomes dimmed, love passes into lust. In our own truest experience love and holiness are ideally inseparable. Even in the dark mirror of our own human nature we can see the reflection of the great truth that holiness is just another aspect of love. The Divine love must ever be a holy love. Love and Holiness are indistinguishable in God. God's love can never tolerate sin. Human love can never attain the true height of its power until sin alike becomes

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intolerable. How easy it is to mistake indulgence for love, the weakness of sentimental pity for the crossbearing strength of true affection. Love is not afraid to vindicate holiness, to rebuke misdoing, to suffer and to inflict suffering for truth and righteousness' sake.

So Jesus, Eternal and Holy Love, revealing the Divine Holiness in the Temple, offered Himself consciously to suffer for the sins of men upon the Cross. It was not that a vindictive Father demanded from an unwilling victim the penalty of death as the price of the appeasement of His wrath. But Love, in the Person of the Incarnate Son of God, offered Himself, as Love must do, in union with the loving Will of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, to uphold even through death the ideal of Holiness, and thus to provide a Way of Holiness along which the ransomed of the Lord might return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. Only a love that is holy, only the love of God could endure to inflict suffering for moral ends, could endure to bear upon its heart the agony of a world in pain, in hope of a world redeemed and purified from evil. The mystery of the Atonement is just the mystery of Holy Love—no more, no less. "The truths of love are like the sea for beauty and for mystery." Love is ever a mystery. Divine Love, like the gifts of Love, must ever be beyond our understanding. But the fact of the Love of God, the reasonableness of its demands, the necessities of its action, the beauty of its holiness —these are all within the reach of our experience.

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The Divine Love is vindicated every day in ways of righteousness, holiness, and truth. It is Love that purifies the temple of the soul in preparation for its own fuller indwelling. It is Love that sets us to suffer that we may sanctify our souls, and purge away all unholiness in the fire of pain and affliction. Shall we still sit at our money-changers' tables, shall we still bargain and traffic and barter, when Jesus Himself comes to the Temple? Do we not need that the mists of avarice and earthly pettiness and sin be cleared from our eyes, that we may recognise Jesus, the Lord of Holiness and of Love, as He enters the Sanctuary of our hearts?

Pray for the love of holiness.

O Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, glorious in holiness, Lover of purity and truth, teach me to hate sin and earnestly to desire all that is holy. May the indwelling Spirit purify my heart and fill me with pure and holy thoughts. Make me always cheerfully to endure all suffering of body or of mind, which shall reveal to me the path of holiness and keep me from sin.

D.

"And He taught daily in the Temple." Even in the day of popular rejoicing, the old voices of opposition had not been silenced. The glad Hosannas of the children's instinctive welcome had roused the bitter envy of the rulers. Jesus knew that the victory was not yet won. He had fathomed truly the latent powers of irreconcilable hostility which were working for His downfall. The rejection of the earlier days

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would be repeated now, repeated with new and fatal emphasis. But there was witness yet to be borne, for which the days of the Festival offered unrivalled opportunity. From all quarters of the world crowds had gathered to the Feast. Daily they would flock to the Temple, presently to carry back to their distant homes the teaching of those wonderful days. While the event of the Crucifixion might touch them with the thrill of momentary surprise, the words of the great Teacher would abide in their memories, to be the theme of frequent thought, the harbinger of a new faith, the incentive to a new holiness. How many of those souls, whom in the first days the Apostles won in such large numbers for the Church, may have been prepared for Christianity by the teaching of Christ Himself in that last Festival week! The Crucifixion itself would set the seal of Divine emphasis upon all that He had said, and give clear permanence to the impressions of those days.

So He taught daily in the Temple. It was not enough that the shrine should be cleansed from defilement by the expulsion of evil. It was not enough that its dedication should be restored by one single act of purifying. Its consecration must be made permanent. It is so with the soul which Jesus has purified. In the cleansing of the Temple we can see the symbol of the soul's absolution. By His gracious act of forgiveness, Christ frees the soul from all pollution and rids it of all defilement. Dedicated and purified afresh, the soul begins a life of new consecration.

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But one single act, certain and effective as it is in its operation, is not all that we need. In the temple which He has cleansed He comes daily to teach. The dedication once restored must be made permanent and enduring by His daily Presence. Eucharist and prayer, meditation and Bible-reading, duty and service—these are the ways by which Christ makes perfect the consecration of each soul which He has purified.

Do we not need to think more worthily of this daily teaching? This is the way, the simple, daily reiterated way in which Christ impresses Himself upon the life. And this, because of its very repetition, its sameness and monotony, we are apt to neglect. The great moments, the moments of vision, of ecstasy in prayer, of happy realised union, of penitence, of absolution—these we value, these we recall, upon these we live. But there are the great interspaces of life between these rare moments, when we are lost to all impression of Christ's nearness, when numbness, cold and drear, settles down upon the soul. Then we need to remember that each day has its own glory of the Divine Presence. Daily He teaches in the Temple. There is His daily Eucharistic coming. Each Eucharist is the perfecting of a grace already given, the continuation of a teaching already begun, the deepening of consecration, the opening of new vision, the opportunity of a fuller adoration. Can any day be forgotten in which such a Presence is offered? And even if, by restrictions of work and place, we are

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hindered from being present at the altar, there is always the opportunity of spiritual communion, by which we can link ourselves to the offering of the faithful, and find new union with Jesus while we plead on behalf of all men the merits of His atoning death.

And prayer takes on a new interest, if it is realised as Jesus teaching daily in the soul. Each day's prayer is the raising anew of the standard of Divine Holiness in the life. In prayer we enter afresh into the understanding of the Will of God. We lift up our hearts to Him. He touches our minds with the light of His truth. He reveals to us somewhat of the Divine purpose. We look at things with something of the Divine vision. We see things more as they are, in the sphere of true reality. We see things in their true proportion, we see people in their true value, as God loves and values them, not as our own self-interest and our own restricted experience would suggest. We see the bountiful mercy of God afresh each day in prayer, and so Jesus teaches us to be thankful. We see our sins, and Jesus teaches us to be humble and gives us the confidence of His protection. Thus prayer is Jesus teaching daily in the soul which He has made His own by a new act of consecration. Prayer enlarges, develops, and preserves the dedication of the soul.

And meditation is even more consciously the teaching of Jesus. It is the acceptance of some special thought of Him, of some particular event in His earthly Life, or of some definite revelation of His

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Word, as the guiding message for the day to keep us continually mindful of His Presence. All the day will be touched with the glory of His Presence, mediated through that special teaching. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to direct our wills in the way of concentration through the day upon the simple theme of our meditation. Such a habit of reflection upon the great truths of revelation makes the teaching of Jesus fit and apt for the practical duties of the day. Religion can never be divorced from life, faith never separated from work, for the man who makes meditation, however simple, a daily habit of devotion. It is just the thoughtful recollection, the reverent turning over in the mind of what Jesus has taught us. Thus Bible-reading and meditation alike represent Jesus teaching daily in the soul, renewing its dedication, making sure the grounds of our hope, preparing the way for fresh advance.

And the day's work and service also bring to us the daily teaching of Jesus. All the conditions of daily life are revelations of God. Where this is recognised, the duties of life are sanctified with the consciousness of Christ's Presence. For most of us, work occupies the greatest part of life. If we cannot sanctify our hours of work, then most of our life will remain unsanctified. But in the daily work Jesus is still teaching us. It is a hidden glory, no doubt, that our hours of work reveal. But all the glory of the Incarnate is a veiled and hidden glory in this world. Just as our Lord veiled the supreme glory of His

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Godhead under the limitations and restrictions of human life, so under the veil of failure, fatigue, monotony, and all the other restraining conditions of human work, we yet may recognise the glory of His Incarnate Presence, by the power of the indwelling Spirit working out in our obedience and faithfulness to duty His own purposes of love. Empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, enriched with the sacramental gift of Christ Himself, dedicated to fulfil the vocation of the Father, we are made adequate and sufficient for each day's work, and find in each simple duty nobly done a fresh dedication of ourselves to God. Thus each day's work perpetuates through the monotony of daily life those impulses and ideals which glorify the rarer moments of special vision, and lifts the whole life up to that higher level of holiness which Jesus came to reveal.

At least in our own lives let us not reject this appeal of Christ, as He offers Himself anew in the Temple. If we seek His purification, let us also accept His daily teaching, going on unto perfection, following on to know the Lord.

A daily commendation.

I commit myself to Thee, Lord Jesus. Make me Thine own. I commit myself to Thy Mercy. Cleanse me from all my sins. I commit myself to Thy Bounty. Grant me the riches of Thy Grace. I commit myself to Thy Wisdom. Teach me to love Thy Holy Will. I commit myself to Thy Power. Keep me from all evil. To the Love of Thy sacred Heart I commit all who are dear to me, all who are dear to Thee. Keep us and unite us to Thee and to one another this day and for ever.

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IV

THE BARREN FIG-TREE

S. MARK xi. 12–14.

THE Triumphal Entry had not ended in the dramatic crisis which the Apostles had expected. It must have been a band of wondering and perplexed disciples that followed Jesus back that night to Bethany. All had seemed so ready for the manifestation of the Messiah. The enthusiasm of the people was undoubted. The whole city was moved. In the face of such a general outburst of favour the murmuring opposition of the Pharisees was unavailing. For what was the Master waiting? On the way back to the city the next morning Jesus gave the answer to such as could receive it. The situation was not so ripe for action as it seemed. The popular movement, which had given the disciples such hope, was not based on any true appreciation of the Person of the Prophet, Who had been made the object of such enthusiastic admiration. Already in Galilee Jesus had refused to be accepted on the terms of popular expectation. He would not be made King. He could not lower His claims. He was the Son of God.

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His whole ministry was directed towards creating in a few loyal hearts such a faith in His unique character and work that His Deity should be presently recognised. Jerusalem was not ready to accept Him. The events of the week would abundantly show the error of the disciples. Meantime He would bear His last witness before the inhabitants of the Holy City, whose religious faith was symbolised by the fig-tree between Bethany and Jerusalem, with its profusion of leaves and its lack of fruit.

A.

Hypocrisy,—"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,"—how the words ring in our ears, the reiterated condemnation with which Jesus denounced the Pharisees. It may seem strange that One so habitually gentle, so wonderfully tender towards sinners, should be so unmitigated in His severity towards this particular class. No other sin called forth such terrible denunciations from the Saviour as this hypocrisy. Perhaps nothing was more difficult for the people of that day to understand than the attitude of Jesus towards their religious leaders. They deserved well of their nation. Their merits were notorious. They honoured and preserved the Law. They lived lives of prayer and good deeds. There was no pretence about their righteousness. They were sincere in their religious protestations. They maintained and relied upon the special privileges of their nation as the chosen people of God. They cherished

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the hope of national deliverance at the coming of the Messiah and included in their ranks the most enthusiastic elements of the patriotic party. Why were they singled out by Christ for condemnation? The barren fig-tree was the symbol of their religious worthlessness. There was indeed profusion of leaves, but fruit was impossible on such a stock. For there was no sense of sin. For them there could be no repentance. And the spirit of penitence is the vital sap of the religious life. They had misinterpreted that very Law of which they had been constituted guardians. To them the Law presented itself as an elaborate rule of life, a very definite code of external duty, an exact ceremonial custom, which embraced in its rigorous and detailed definitions all the manifold contingencies of daily life. All this was contrary to the very spirit of the Mosaic Law. The Law was essentially moral, not ceremonial. It dealt with motive, not with effect; with principle, not with custom. The Law was holiness, righteousness, and truth. In a word, the Law was Love.

And the true-thinking Pharisee could have discovered this. It was no hidden mystery. It was open to every man of good will to understand. Saul of Tarsus knew it. There was no Pharisee so profound in his knowledge of the Law, so enthusiastic and rigorous in its practice, as Saul. To his generous heart the Law brought an intolerable sense of sin, from which it could itself give no relief. The Law with its great fundamental demands upon the moral

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nature could not be fulfilled by man unaided. For its fulfilment other help must be sought. It suggested an ideal of goodness which could only be achieved by the victorious aid of God. Thus the Law led to Christ. Christ alone could ease the guilty conscience. Christ alone could strengthen and sanctify. That was Saul's own experience.

There was nothing, therefore, in the Law itself which prevented the Pharisee from gaining the spirit of penitence. Indeed, as S. Paul said, the very purpose of the Law was to provoke the sense of sin and unworthiness. The Pharisees, of whom Christ spoke, were self-blinded. They had succeeded in shutting out the light entirely from their own lives. They had no sense of need. There was for them no hope of progress. They misconceived God. They could not recognise love and sinlessness when Christ stood before them. They were to be the heralds of the Kingdom of God, and when the King Himself came to His own, they received Him not. It surprises us that after all the long preparation of the ages, Jesus was not recognised by His own people when He came. He Himself has explained why it was. There was no expectation of a Saviour. The Jews had been taught to look for a King. But Jesus must be known as Saviour first. Then only can His Kingship be welcomed and understood. For this misdirection of the national hope the Pharisees, as religious leaders of the people, were responsible. Upon them, therefore, as having the greater sin, the

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denunciation of Jesus fell. The whole nation was symbolised by the barren fig-tree. It was not ripe for any fruit of faith, or righteousness or love. The sap of the nation's life was not strong enough to produce anything but leaves. Leaves in profusion there might be, but there could be no hope of fruit.

B.

How closely this lesson of the fig-tree touches life to-day. Whether it be the life of a nation or the life of the individual, it is true that there is no strength without a real sense of innate weakness. There is no life without penitence. There is profusion of leaves. Leaves are necessary. But they are not the triumph of the tree. They should be precursors, harbingers, witnesses of fruit. We have to-day the growing sense of human power. Every year testifies by new discoveries to the increasing sovereignty of man over the powers of nature. Every year extends our knowledge of the range of man's spiritual faculties. With every advance in knowledge the dignity of man assumes grander proportions. But these things are the leaves. They are not the fruit. These wonders of moral and intellectual power prepare the way for man's growth in spiritual things. And there, in the spiritual world, the starting-point of life is the need of God's help. Man cannot live by bread alone. Man is not self-sufficient. By the terms of creation, he needs fellowship with God for his perfection, and, apart from God, man is wanting and incomplete.

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Even the perfect and sinless Man Himself, living the true human life, needed the grace of the Holy Spirit for the fulfilment of His Humanity. And so we must start with that sense of need deeply graven in our hearts. For we have sinned. And the hypocrisy, against which the Saviour warns us, is not the blatant pretence of being what we know we are not, trying to deceive other people, but something deeper still, something which really deceives ourselves, trying to live as though we were not daily in need of God's pardon and God's help. And that touches us all.

In our most earnest moments we ask that we may have a deeper sense of sin. It is the great desire of those who are nearest God. They are always praying for it. To desire it earnestly, to pray for it daily, is the first step towards acquiring it. It does not mean of necessity a conscious self-loathing, expressing itself in terms of abject depreciation. It does not mean a sense of entire inefficiency and complete worthlessness. It does not mean the denial of real capacity, nor the disregard of faculties with which God has enriched our lives. But it does mean the daily recognition of the need of the sustaining power of God to maintain all the faculties of the life in their true and proper functions. It means the regular and disciplined use of the sacramental means of grace, whereby the divine Life is diffused through all the avenues of heart and will and mind. The sense of sin is not a whining, puling spirit of powerlessness. It is the very spirit of strength, for it lays hold of the

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grace of God. It is not cowardice, but courage. It does not mean the depreciation of the powers of life, nor the desertion of its duties, but it means the courageous use of all our faculties in humble, hopeful submission to the Will of God. S. Paul had a peculiarly deep sense of sin. It was the secret of his untiring activity in God's service. "I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The fruitfulness of our lives will depend upon this willing correspondence with the grace of God, to which we are irresistibly led by a true sense of sin. There may be much in our life that is attractive, beautiful, effective and beneficent, but if the strength of our life is not consciously drawn from correspondence with the grace of God, then there is no guarantee of permanence, no hope of abiding and eternal fruitfulness. We may lead, but we shall lead blindly. We may pray, but we cannot be praying truly. We may do good works, but they lack the right motive of consecration and the lasting power of truly dedicated service. We may deceive ourselves, but we seldom deceive others, and we cannot deceive God.

Pray for the spirit of true penitence.

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hatest nothing that Thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent, create and make in me a new and contrite heart, that, worthily lamenting my sins and acknowledging my wretchedness, I may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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C.

And Jesus passed on from the barren fig-tree which He had cursed, to make the great purification of the Temple. It was the hypocrisy of the Pharisees which had prevented their recognition of His Person. He had brought them the revelation of the Father. And their condemnation was, that the very God, Whose children they professed to be, was unknown to them. They could not recognise His Son, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person. The Scriptures had spoken of Him. The Pharisees valued the Scriptures. They paid them extravagant honour. With jealous accuracy they safeguarded every syllable, and transmitted every word of the precious heritage. But Him they saw not, though it was of Him the Scriptures spoke. And when the voice of the dead prophets availed not, God had appealed to them by the living voice of the Baptist, awaking once more in the wilderness the echoes of prophetic revelation. He spoke of One amongst them Whom they knew not, Who should be preferred before him, Who was before him. The Pharisees sent a delegation into the wilderness to ask for the Baptist's credentials. And still their eyes were closed. Then God brought His Son nearer. In their midst He worked signs and wonders which spoke indubitably of His divine mission. And still they would not see. The very words of wisdom and grace which He spake, "which the Father gave Me to

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speak," had no hint of divine revelation for them. Every appeal had failed. Yet He would persist to the end, if only some might heed.

And it was not only the Pharisees, and not only the people, who were approaching the great crisis in blind ignorance. There were the Apostles. How much did they understand? The appeal, which had been made to the Galileans by parable and works of wonder, had been enforced for the disciples by their private intercourse and intimacy with Jesus. And at length the moment had come, when the patience of Jesus had been rewarded by the sudden flash of recognition which had burst from S. Peter at Caesarea Philippi. It was a moment of revelation, up to the light of which the Apostles had not yet learned to live continuously. For them too Jesus had a revelation to make and words to say in the purified courts of the Temple. He must reveal the willingness of His death. At the approach of the Passion they would think that He had been suddenly surprised by His enemies, that all His plans had failed and that He was being unexpectedly forced to a cruel death. He would speak words which, though they would not lead the Apostles to the immediate confession of His Godhead, would be interpreted after the Resurrection as a clear witness to the willing oblation which He was purposing for man's salvation. Then, in the light of these words, they would recognise how willingly He had surrendered Himself to the atoning Passion and the

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Death upon the Cross. But that was a vision yet to come. When the crisis fell upon them, despite all their professions of loyalty and belief, the very Apostles were found wanting. Had not the lesson of the fig-tree some appropriateness for them as well as for the Pharisees? Was there not some form of self-deceit from which even the disciples were not free?

And is it not true to-day that even in those who follow the way of the Cross there linger traces of self-deceit and forms of subtle hypocrisy which blind us, as they did the Apostles, to the purposes of Christ? We need a clearer and more effective recognition of the Deity of Jesus, a recognition which shall avail to uphold us with certain assurance when we come face to face with the great crises of life; which shall enable us to have such a firm trust in the adequacy of the help of His indwelling Spirit that we can calmly endure the perplexities, and brave the difficulties, of the daily round, finding ever a divine glory in the common task. Let us not blind ourselves to the fact that suffering and darkness and sorrows of surprise may be even in our own lives, as they were for the disciples, the way of the Master's love. We can learn at least from their experience to be ready for such a revelation, if it be God's will. Can we really welcome the Cross to-day for ourselves, leaning trustfully on the assured conviction of the Deity of Christ, looking indeed unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith?

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Pray for self-knowledge.

O Lord Jesus, Searcher of hearts and Lover of my soul, teach me to know myself truly. Give me the grace of sincerity, and keep me from blindness of heart and from all self-deceit. May the light of Thy Holy Spirit shine upon me and guide me in the way of truth and holiness, that I may love Thee with a pure heart fervently, with a good conscience and with faith unfeigned, and may serve Thee faithfully all the days of my life.

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V

THE LAST APPEAL

S. LUKE xx. 1–8; S. JOHN xii. 20-33; S. MARK xiii. 1–37.

EARLY on the second day after the triumphal entry, Jesus returned again from Bethany to Jerusalem. It was a day of crowded incident. The end was drawing very near. The startling event of the previous day, the Purification of the Temple, had roused all the forces of opposition in the city. The triumphal procession was an offence which had been hardly borne, the cleansing of the Temple was a challenge which could not be overlooked. Religious authority must assert itself. The time had gone by for secret plots and hidden intrigues. Open concerted action must now be taken. So this day became the Day of Questions, when each several party of His enemies, in pursuance of a common understanding, sought in turn to entangle Jesus openly in His talk, challenging His authority, speciously appealing for His decision on questions cleverly contrived to invite either a declaration of political partisanship, or a conflict with Mosaic authority. In reply Christ met each attack with an appeal to the first principles of religious truth,

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and in a series of parables warned the Jews against the perils incurred in the wilful rejection of the Son of God. Special interest attached to all the incidents of the day, because it was the last day of Christ's public teaching, His last instruction in the Temple, His last appeal to Jerusalem. It would be impossible in a short meditation to recall all the events and sayings of such a day, but three subjects may be chosen which are typical of the incidents and teaching of the day—Christ's answer when challenged for His authority, the coming of the Greeks, and His teaching on "the last things" given to His disciples. These, each in their own way, represent different aspects of our Lord's approach to the Passion, and reveal the great issues which depended on the Sacrifice which He was about to offer.

A.

"As He was teaching the people in the Temple and preaching the Gospel, there came upon Him the chief priests and the scribes, with the elders, and they spake, saying unto Him, 'Tell us, by what authority doest Thou these things, or who is He that gave Thee this authority?'" The desire of the rulers was to compel Jesus to declare Himself in some emphatic title, which might be openly discredited and disproved in the hearing of the people. Such authority as that which He had assumed in the Temple could only be based on some unusual claim to obedience. Was He Messiah? Let Him say so, if that was what He

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meant. Then the people would know what to expect, they would look for the leadership of the sword, for the might of the earthly sovereign, and, looking in vain, would rise against the self-convicted impostor.

What power had He to over-ride priest and prophet, to subvert the faith of the nation? Was He the Son of God? Let Him say so. Then, with the cry of "Blasphemy," they would have the support of ecclesiastical law in hurrying Him off to death. But Jesus knew their hearts. Had they asked in reverence and love, in true and honest desire for enlightenment, assuredly He had given a very different answer.

But seeing their hypocrisy, He tried to reveal to them their own treacherous inconsistency by appealing to their reception of the Baptist. They had accepted the Baptist's teaching. Many had submitted to his baptism. They could not deny the prophetic character of his mission. His success attested the divine authority of his work. In their own hearts they knew that the ministry of John the Baptist was "from heaven." They had admitted as much already by act and word. But they had failed to live up to their conviction. The moral and spiritual demands of the Baptist had been too high for them. They had indeed rejoiced in his light for a season. But when he had spoken of the Lamb of God and the mission of One greater than himself, coming with the authority of God to carry on his work to full completion in the plenary power of the Spirit, then they hesitated, and

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their enthusiasm died away. But the admission of the Baptist's divine authority had been made. The authority of Jesus was of God also, but it was more emphatic than that of the Baptist, because He had not only a mission from the Father, but He was Himself God. To those who would not live up to the simple truth which their hearts had fully realised it was useless to present the greater truth, which in like manner would be ruthlessly rejected. Jesus therefore made no new revelation of Himself, but appealed to the witness of their own hearts. Would they be true to their experience? No, for the public acceptance of the divine mission of the Forerunner would mean the acceptance of his message in all its fulness. And the witness of the Baptist to his successor had concluded with the unequivocal words, "I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God." They were not ready to stultify themselves now by such an admission of the Baptist's divine authority. Equally they were not ready to incur the opposition of the people by an open disclaimer. Therefore they refused an answer. And Jesus in turn was silent—silent in mercy, because He would not make a revelation for which they were not ready. It was impossible to set before them His claims to divine authority, when they could not yet accept the mission of the Baptist. They were incapable of understanding His true credentials. They could not recognise the supremacy of His spiritual power, the unearthliness of His character, the stainless perfection of His life, the innate truthfulness of His

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teaching. There can be only one answer which divine mercy can give. "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

Have we doubts as to the authority of Christ? Do we question the right of His Church to speak in authoritative terms of the duties of Christian life? May it not be that we are false to the facts of our own spiritual experience? We have received the baptism, not of John, but of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we have not responded faithfully to the first impulses of the Divine Indwelling. To reject the aid of the Holy Spirit in daily life is to close our lives to the revelation of Christ. Conscious dependence upon His inspiration from day to day is the condition of advance in faith, of assurance in belief, of growth in spiritual power. Christ can make no new revelation of Himself, while we do not live up to the light which we already have. Doubts crowd in upon the life, when there has been refusal to accept the highest, when obedience has flagged, and sin has perverted and weakened the will. Christ makes His authority manifest to the conscience. There is a lurking acceptance of the fact of His supremacy, but it is not strongly enough asserted to influence the will. Jesus can make no further revelation, because it would not be understood. It is not mathematical demonstration that we need to justify the claims of Christ. All that is needed is the true interpretation of the actual experience of our lives. The lines of proof converge in a hundred ways upon the fact of His Deity. But

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men's eyes are blinded by their wilfulness. They have not the courage of real conviction. They cannot tell. They dare not accept His Deity. It makes such demands upon the life. Neither can they account Him as "from men." For that denies the patent facts of life and history. So they are content to remain in suspense. They make no assertion. They profess no belief. But they live as though He made no claims and asserted no authority. To such no new revelation comes, for such no conviction rises to enrich and beautify life. Let us be warned by the weak irresolution and feeble hesitancy of the Jews. Let us be true to the light we have. If we truly live up to the realities of our past experience, then we shall be prepared for the new revelation of Christ's Presence and Christ's Power that lies before us.

Contemplate the power of God in your life.

Recall the mercies of God, the marks of His guidance, the signs of His love. Think of the providence of God revealed at the turning-points of life. Meditate on the quiet leading of God which has given you your present vocation. Trace the signs of Christ's power in the lives of those whom you know. Mark the tranquil happiness of those who have surrendered their wills to the unquestioned authority of Christ. Thank God for the response which heart and conscience have made to the claims of Jesus. Resolve to follow more closely and more stedfastly the path of obedience. It is those who do His will to whom He reveals His deeper teaching. In personal submission to Christ seek for the surest proof of His sovereignty.

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B.

The Jews persisted in their rejection of Christ. But the festival had brought certain Greek proselytes to Jerusalem, and in the midst of His sorrow over Israel's rejection the Heart of Jesus was cheered with the vision of acceptance by the Gentile world. "Sir, we would see Jesus." So Philip and Andrew brought the Greek representatives of the great Gentile world to speak with the Saviour. It was the Epiphany of the public ministry. At Bethlehem the worship of the Magi had foreshadowed the homage of a ransomed world. Even then in those first days, while the kings of the Gentiles offered adoration and worship, the king of the Jews was plotting death. But then the Saviour's hour had not yet come. He had yet to present Himself before His own people and make His patient appeal, offering in His life the revelation of the Father's love. And now the appeal had been made. The end was at hand. Once more while Jews plotted to kill, Gentiles approached in reverence. Their coming was a sign to Jesus that the Cross was near. "Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." Before Him lay the vision of that sovereignty over the nations which should be won by the Passion and the Cross. He received the coming of the Greeks as the token of the Father's Will, the sign that His long-looked-for hour had come, the hour of "glory." But "glory" for the Son of Man was not the power and

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wealth of the kingdoms of the world, such as Satan had once offered. It was the glory of the cross, the glory of life triumphant through death. Therefore lest the Greeks should misunderstand His words, and lest moved by the memories of the triumphal entry they should picture some glorious pageant of earthly splendour, Jesus interpreted His meaning. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Death alone was fruitful. The harvest of the great world could never be, unless death opened to the seed the way of life. To that death He now gave Himself. It was not a sacrifice without cost to His suffering Humanity. "Now is my soul troubled." Here was a forecast of the agony of Gethsemane. In the truth of His human nature He shrank from the suffering of death. In the fulness of divine love He sorrowed for the sin of the world which made the Cross the way of salvation. But, cost what it may, His will was stedfastly set for sacrifice. "For this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name." And the obedience of the Son was sealed with the accepting voice of the Father. "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Once more the sanction of the Father was audibly given to the Passion of Christ. The voice that certified the Passion to the chosen disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, now in the presence of these Gentiles made promise of the glory of God, which should shine from the cross, flashing out to the wide pagan world "the light of

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the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ." The heavenly voice might be misunderstood by the people. It seemed like the sound of thunder, or the mighty tones of some angel's message. Jesus therefore explained its significance in words, which should be the hope of the Gentile world. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." So on that day of questions, through the dark cloud of Jewish rejection there shone the bright star of Gentile hope, and the soul of Jesus was cheered with the vision of joy that was set before Him. Already He saw the "great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues" standing before the throne redeemed by the Death of the Cross.

There is no doubt of the wonderful significance which this visit of the Greeks had for our Lord. It is the only incident which St. John records between the triumphal entry and the scenes in the upper room. It brings out clearly the missionary aspect of the Passion. It assures us of the victory of Christ in the mission field. There is enough at all times to make the most earnest and the most hopeful pause in their outlook upon the progress of the Church. Political hindrances, educational unreadiness, sudden relapses. Moslem advances, insufficiency of means, opportunities lost through lack of workers, nations wakened to freedom but not won for Christ—these are some of the clouds which hang over the life of the Church to-day and dim the vision of the future. And at

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moments when these difficulties are most pressing and the work seems most hopeless, then we can refresh our hearts with the vision of Christ's victory, and look at the world through the eyes of His hope. "I will draw all men unto Me." To believe in the victory of our Lord is to dedicate ourselves anew to His service. It is the quickening of the individual will to play its own part untiringly in the battle of God. It is only through the co-operation of our wills that the mediatorial Kingdom of Christ can be extended through the world. He waits for us. He waits for me. What am I doing? Where in my life is the victorious power of missionary prayer? Where is the sacrifice that marks my offering for the work of Christ in the wide wilderness spaces of heathendom to-day? Personal service in these fields growing white unto harvest may not, perhaps, be my own vocation. But those who labour there are representing me. I must link my sacrifice to theirs.

It is by sacrifice that the victory is won. Life is multiplied only through death. To stand aloof is to die in lonely unfruitfulness. Isolation means sterility. There must be the committal of the seed in faith to the darkness of the furrow. It must burst its sheath, and with struggle and effort lay hold of the co-operating forces that surround it. Then comes the beginning of a fresh life, a glad uprising into light, the gathering of a new beauty, to be crowned with the glory of fruitbearing, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold. "If it die, it

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bringeth forth much fruit." Fruit in the mission field must come by sacrifice, by death. This is the explanation of every life laid down, of every suffering, of every sorrow, of all the hardships, all the disappointments, all the sacrifices with which the story of the mission field is glorified. And this is the trumpet call to a new spirit of unselfish sacrifice in those who would help forward the realisation of the vision of Christ. "If any man serve Me, let Him follow Me." These are the words of the Victor of the world as He dedicated Himself to the atoning death upon the Cross. There is but one way of life, the way of the wondrous Passion. There is but one way of fruitfulness, the way of sacrifice.

Think of the mission field and the call to sacrifice.

Call to mind the mission which you know best. Think in detail of the immense difficulties of presenting the Faith of Christ in its fulness to such a people. Realise the unpreparedness of their surroundings, the uncongenial atmosphere of their life, the force of evil traditions, the social hindrances, the political difficulties. Think of the people as they are in the ideal vision of Christ. See all those forces of national character, refined, transfigured, perfected through union with Christ. Realise the joy, the vigour, of such a redeemed people. Is it not worth immediate sacrifice? Does it not call for immediate service? And if for one nation or people we can picture the gladness and strength of a race won to Christ, what must be the joy of the world-victory for which Jesus waits? Thank Him for the redemption which He has won, and in the power of that redemption give yourself in some new way to the mission service of His Church.

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C.

On that crowded day Jesus had a message not only for the Jews who rejected Him, not only for the Greeks who came to Him in the spirit of reverent inquiry and learned from His lips the conditions of true discipleship, but for the Apostles also. The end was indeed drawing near. They would soon be deprived of His visible companionship. They would be plunged in a sea of peril and distress. The new era which was to open before them was not the time of transcendent earthly glory which they expected. A great disenchantment lay before them.

As they retraced their steps to Bethany, Jesus and His Apostles came to a spot from which they turned to take a last look at the beauty of the Temple. Before our Lord's eyes rose the vision of the future, with the inevitable judgment which should fall upon the Holy City. He saw the long struggle between good and evil continuing down the ages. He saw the confused and fearful tumult of the nations, the portents of Nature, the peril of Christendom, the birth pangs of the new world, the faithfulness of the saints, the judgment of the wicked, the manifestation of the kingdom. There are those who are led by such passages as these to think that Jesus believed that the end of the world was very near, and that the new kingdom which should take the place of the existing order of the world would begin at once to be supernaturally established. They would say that "the

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last things" held the predominant place in His thought and teaching. But the thought of Christ which is here revealed is something far grander, far truer than that. Doubtless His disciples did not fully understand. True it was that His coming was ardently expected by the early Church. But Jesus expressly refused to state any definite time in His description of the end. Rather He described the general features which again and again in the history of the Church should mark successive cycles of expectation and of judgment. It was not the detailed events which Christ was concerned to reveal, but the nature of the powers of evil which would be continuously at work in varying forms until final judgment swept them all away. The fall of Jerusalem indeed was present to His mind, but it was present as magnificently typical of the sure doom that must always fall upon evil. Every age would witness the patient victory of good. Endurance would be strained, faith would be sorely tested, truth would suffer violent assault, but "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And in every crisis of peril men might see a *Parousia* of Christ, a coming of Jesus, an ever-recurring deliverance, which should prepare the way for the day of final redemption. The cycle of persecution and portent, of patience and stedfast faith, would be frequently renewed. The very dangers of the Christian community before the fall of Jerusalem would be repeated in growing intensity as the days lengthened. Men might well be tempted to despond

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in face of the persecution of the world without and the discord and disunion of the Church within. But the promise to the Church was sure, "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed." With such comfort Jesus sought to prepare His disciples for the approaching conflict, and to send His promise echoing down the ages. For to Him the future lay revealed. The delay of His coming was no surprise to Him. We Christians of to-day were not beyond the reach of His vision. And therein lies our hope. The Church has passed through various phases of conflict and of peace. The cycle of persecution has well-nigh returned. We have our own great dangers to face in the widening schism between the law of Christ and the morality of the world. False Christs are proclaimed and new theologies are thrust before us. The faith of many may wax cold. But the Cross has not failed. Jesus saw all this and spoke of it to His disciples as He gave Himself to the Passion.

The victory which once for all He won in His own Person upon the Cross was a victory to be worked out in individual lives by individual effort in the power of His grace. To-day I have my share to take in the extension of that victory, in the individual appropriation of that triumph. May I be among those that endure to the end, that I may win "the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

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VI

BETHANY

S. MARK xiv. 3-9; S. JOHN xii. 1-9.

BEHIND all the strain of the ministry in Jerusalem lies the quiet retreat of Bethany. Here in the little household of Simon, Jesus revealed the beauty of human friendship, and consecrated by His acceptance the tender ministries of loving thoughtfulness and service. What Nazareth had been in the days of His retirement, Bethany became for the days of His Jerusalem ministry. S. John describes very fully how exacting was the work at Jerusalem. Christ was ever among foes, always on the alert against very subtle enemies, exposed to unceasing attack, spending Himself generously in persistent controversy, devoting Himself to the incessant work of instruction. It must have been a tired and weary Master, Who from time to time found shelter from the hatred of Jerusalem in the loving intercourse of the home at Bethany. It must have been His frequent retreat.

A.

The family at Bethany followed Jesus in His work with the insight of true sympathy and the reverence

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of grateful affection. The approach of the hour of crisis did not escape their watchful care. One at least among them foreboded death. As He sat at meat, on the day before His entry into Jerusalem, Mary had brought her treasured box of ointment, and dedicated to Him the offering which had been preserved for the anointing of the dead. It had been a whole-hearted offering. The precious alabaster box had been utterly broken that the whole fragrance of the spike-nard might anoint His sacred head. Had she thought that the violence of His adversaries would rob her of the last tender ministries of love? She could not know of the joyful Resurrection, which should anticipate the wonted offices of sorrowing affection. She did what she could. She made her offering immediately, she made it lavishly, so lavishly that it stirred the anger of Judas, and revealed the discontent and suspicion which were fast goading him into treachery. But Jesus understood. And He has left to us the memory of this sacrifice of trustful love, as a sign of the welcome which He gives to all the tender ministries of gratitude and affection which men may offer in honour of their Redeemer.

How gently, with what loving insight, Jesus accepts our service! Nothing is too great to give Him. He claims all that love can give. His acceptance enriches the gift and blesses the sacrifice. So love can give its all. And the fragrance of the gift will fill the House of God. That which is spent on Jesus refreshes His Mystical Body, the Church.

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Each quiet deed of love, each unselfish thought, each generous sacrifice enriches the life of the Church, and gives joy to the brotherhood of the Saints. Mary herself to-day must thrill with happiness at the joy of Christ in each fresh act of love which her own offering has inspired.

As each separate member of Christ stands firm in the loyalty of his surrender, and rises to each new act of noble obedience, of stedfast endurance or of loving and true service, the whole fellowship receives strength. There is a sympathy among all the members which extends far beyond our actual ken. The world invisible responds to the influence of each earthly deed. Every impulse of generous sacrifice, every act of consecration and holy service brings joy and strength to the fellowship of the Saints, and increases the devotion of the whole Church.

Within our hands, as members of Christ, is placed this power of untold influence. When we are remiss in our prayers, and wanting in our devotion, the souls of others suffer mightily for our neglect. When we are faithful in our own self-consecration, the lives of others are strengthened, and the joy of the members is reflected in the gladness of the Head, for Jesus Himself welcomes our stedfastness with the sympathy of a soul that has passed unscathed through all the temptations of human life. With what fragrance of holy deed and grateful offering shall we fill the whole House of God to-day? Mary gave thanks for a father restored to health, for a brother brought back

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to life, above all, for the Friendship of Jesus. Have we not blessings just as wonderful to inspire us to grateful sacrifice and loving service? "She has done what she could." Can the Master say that of us?

Resolve to make some offering of grateful love to Jesus.

Lord Jesus, Who hast given Thyself to die upon the Cross for me, and hast blessed me with so many gifts of love, and hast vouchsafed to call Thyself my Friend and to dwell with me, accept this my purpose of dedicated service and offering, in gratitude for all that Thou hast been to me. And grant that in the power of the Spirit my faithfulness may avail to the help and happiness of many in the fellowship of the Saints, to Thy honour and glory, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

B.

In the intercourse of Jesus with His friends at Bethany, we see the consecration of home-life. The happiness of the home lay in the nearness of each to Jesus. The characters of the household are clearly sketched in the simple record which the Evangelists have left. The individuality of each is carefully marked. Each one finds in Jesus the satisfaction of the most intimate personal needs. We are allowed to see the home in sorrow as well as in joy. There is no test of home so sure as that of sorrow. When the illness of Lazarus raised anxiety in the home, they sent at once to tell Jesus. And when the sorrow of bereavement lay upon them, it was to Jesus that they turned for the comfort that never failed. And not only in crises, but in the little things of the

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service of the home, it was to Jesus that they looked. When Martha felt overburdened with household duties, she appealed to Jesus to send Mary to her help. And only One Whose word was law to her, Whose sympathy was beyond doubt, could have administered the gentle rebuke, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

How often the house-pride of Martha robs the home of devotion, and fills the day with such endless activities that no time is left for quiet, no leisure for prayer! Jesus is soon forgotten, where no opportunity at all is made for "that good part" of Mary, "who sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." We need to inspire all the Martha-service of the home with the sense of Christ's sympathy and presence. It was not for her service that He rebuked Martha, but for house-service exaggerated into such importance, that it called a soul away from Christ. Brother Laurence has shown how the simplest menial service of the home may be dignified by the consciousness of Christ's Presence. While Martha fulfilled the work, for which she was so fitted, with a simple sense of the dignity of the Master Whom she served, Jesus would have her pay due regard to the vocation of her sister, whose temperament was so different. What difficulties spring up in the home from unthinking or jealous neglect of the different characters of its members! All must

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help, if the work of the house is to be done. But careful attention to the special temperament of each would often lead to a re-arrangement of duties, and ensure a better fulfilment of work and a happier fellowship. Work is a great vocation. But work need never be anxious. The worker need never be "careful and troubled about many things." The work can only be done perfectly, where there is that sense of peace which comes from trust in the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit's power. The Holy Spirit inspires alike for work and for devotion. With such a reliance upon the Spirit's daily help, the worker is not "cumbered about much service." Room may be made for Mary's need of more quiet and meditation. Martha will arrange for that and will feel that in so doing she is fulfilling the Master's wish and bringing two lives nearer Christ.

Home is indeed the high altar of daily sacrifice. Nowhere does Jesus ask such great things and ask them so continually. To be generous to those at home, to bear with the peevishness of chronic infirmity, to endure without murmuring the continual presence of an uncongenial and jarring temperament, to give scope to the self-realisation of different characters, to do the humble necessary duties of the home, unthanked and unrecognised, continually to see the worst side of those who are always with us, without making unloving judgments,—these are some of the ways of sacrifice which home reveals. And only if Jesus be with us, the loved and welcomed Guest as He was at

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Bethany, can the duties of home be consecrated. We shall not forget that it was in the home at Bethany that Jesus found rest in that last week of His earthly life. It was from the shelter of that home that He went forth to the great Sacrifice, cheered by the human love of hearts dedicated in simple gratitude to His service. Shall it not be from our homes too—homes where Jesus is known as Master and Friend—that men and women go forth to-day refreshed for the sacrifice which God asks, cheered for the service of the Cross by the very strength of pure human love and affection?

C.

For one whole day Jesus rested at Bethany. Even at such a time He could spare a day for retirement. Days of work had been followed by nights of prayer, and now the days of crisis at Jerusalem were succeeded by a whole day devoted to quiet rest. Always the life of Jesus had been marked by times of retreat and periods of seclusion. Twelve years of quiet boyhood had led to the first visit to the Temple and the rising consciousness of His mission. Eighteen years of silent manhood were the preparation for the brief period of public ministry. And in that ministry were times of withdrawal and frequent solitudes for communion with the Father. Never were there years so filled with unbroken work, yet never was work prepared for by such continual retirement. So now on the very eve of sacrifice Jesus paused and refreshed

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His soul with the rest of Bethany. And while He rested, His enemies plotted. On that very day Judas was making his bargain with the chief priests. Still Jesus rested and showed no sign. In the truth of His Humanity Jesus held communion with the Father and gathered together the forces of His will for the crisis that lay before Him. With resolute, clear-eyed deliberation Jesus counted the cost, as He set His feet upon the final way of sacrifice. It was no hasty act, no act of compulsion, but a willing and spontaneous offering, pledged in the quiet spaces of retreat.

The rest of Bethany is what we need to-day. It is so easy to be carried along the ceaseless stream of perpetual activities. The duties of life are so insistent. The work of the day is so absorbing; the stress of business is so great. We are so easily persuaded that there can be no time for devotion, no room for rest, no leisure for thought. So day follows day in one long round of busy activity, life becomes a mechanical routine and weariness falls upon the soul, till it needs a supreme effort of will to think of spiritual things at all. Rest needs faith. It is so hard to believe that the few quiet minutes painfully secured for prayer and remembrance of God will really lighten the labours of the day and enrich the powers of life. It needs great concentration of will to shut out the anxieties of work, and to rest calmly in the realised presence of Christ. But this spiritual rest, this habit of daily retreat, is the only condition of effective and enduring work. Life becomes so mean, so sordid, so

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stifling, when there is no space saved for the restful things of God. We need to have heaven poured into this shut house of life, that our activities may be braced to their full vigour, that a spirit of thoroughness may animate our work. In the busiest life a daily Bethany of rest may be found, if we are friends of Jesus. And where that rest is kept, the sense of the presence of Jesus is carried through all the work of the day, difficulties do not oppress, failure does not terrify, fatigue becomes a cross unmurmuringly borne, and through all the clouds of earthly care, hope gleams eternal.

Pray for the spirit of daily recollection.

Into Thy Hands, O Lord, I commend myself this day. Teach me in all the work of life to seek rest with Thee. Strengthen my will that I may ever keep tryst with Thee, before I give myself to the work of the world. Grant that the spirit of peace and faith may rest upon all my service. Inspire me with the consciousness of Thy Presence and empower me with the strength of Thy Holy Spirit, that in the midst of work I may be refreshed with the multitude of peace and may ever adorn the doctrine of Thee, my Saviour, in all things.

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VII

THE UPPER ROOM

S. MATTHEW xxvi. 17-30; 1 CORINTHIANS xi. 23-34.

WHEN the evening of the next day drew near, Jesus left the home at Bethany and made His last entry into Jerusalem. Two disciples, wondering and expectant, had been sent earlier to prepare the Upper Room for His coming. That very night Jesus would keep the Passover with His disciples. Jerusalem was full. But in that Upper Room alone in all Jerusalem would any company be gathered that night round the table of the Passover feast. On the morrow, even while the lambs were being killed in the Temple courts for the typical sacrifice of the Passover meal, the Lamb of God Himself would be offered upon the Cross, the effectual Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. So Jesus sat down with His disciples to inaugurate the Kingdom. Their minds were attuned to expect some solemn pronouncement. They felt that the crisis of His self-manifestation had at last approached. They looked for the clear expression of a new Sovereignty, for the enunciation of plans of conquest, for the establishment of the new Kingdom.

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Jesus did indeed make a momentous self-disclosure, He did indeed institute a new Kingdom, but it was very different from their hopes. At that Passover feast Jesus gave Himself to the Cross as the throne of His Sovereignty. He dedicated Himself to Death as the climax of victory, and gave His own Flesh and Blood to be the food of immortality, the vital energising power of the eternal Kingdom of God, thus inaugurated amongst men.

A.

"This is My Body, which is given for you." "This is My Blood, which is shed for you." Mysterious words indeed to the awed disciples, words which express the oblation of Jesus unto death. This is the manifest and deliberate offering of Himself to death. By this action, prefiguring His Death, Jesus declared the willingness of His sacrifice. He surrendered Himself willingly, out of sheer love, not by constraint or of necessity. Without agony, in the calm of considered purpose and deliberate resolve, Christ dedicated Himself in the presence of His disciples to the death, which they thought was wrung from Him by a sudden act of popular violence. In the midst of the solemn ritual of the Passover feast, out of the hush and awe of this last intercourse with His chosen followers, Jesus instituted this Memorial of the Death to which He hereby devoted Himself. By the separate consecration of the Bread and the Wine, by the twofold gift of His Body and His Blood, He

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foreshadowed the violence of His Sacrificial Death. And to-day upon the Christian altar in the separate consecration of the two sacred species of the Body and the Blood of Christ we see the vivid representation of the Death of agony upon the Cross, which consummated the great Sacrifice. The mystical severance of the Body and the Blood is the Memorial of His Death. There we behold a mystical dying of the Redeemer, Who gives Himself for our life.

And surely in each Eucharist we would seek to reproduce in our own lives the spirit of oblation which marked the first Eucharist of Christ. The oblation of Christ Himself is perfect, sufficient, and complete. It is not only an offering unto death, but it is an offering that continues through death. Death was the gateway to the consummation of His offering. For the offering that Jesus makes is not the offering of His Godhead, but the offering of perfect Manhood, brought stainless and untainted through the suffering of death, presented continually before the throne of the Father. That heavenly offering, which He pleads perpetually by His Presence in the fulness of His perfect Humanity before the Father, is the issue of His first oblation unto death. And it is in union with that Heavenly oblation that we offer the Sacrifice of the Eucharist upon earth to-day. Jesus in the fulness of His victorious Humanity, triumphant over death, makes ceaseless oblation of Himself for our sakes before the throne of God. It is that same Jesus,

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present in sacramental efficacy with us upon our earthly altars, Whom we offer to the Father at every Eucharist, our perfect Propitiation, our spotless Offering.

And if that is the nature of Christ's oblation, the whole-offering of Love which falters not at the pain of the Cross and perseveres in the perpetually efficacious Sacrifice of the Heavenly Intercession, then as we bring ourselves under the influence of that Redemption and present the Eucharistic Memorial of that atoning Death, we would ourselves approach in the spirit of true oblation. The disciples indeed might enter little into the wonder of that first Eucharist, might stumble at the thought of Christ's oblation and be unmindful of the stupendous Sacrifice of which they were witnesses. But it cannot be so with us. We have the experience of the same Apostles taught later by the Holy Ghost, we have the unbroken testimony of the Church, we have the witness of history to the majesty of Christ's oblation, to the power of response in the human heart which it is able to evoke. So we would make more real the effective oblation of our own heart and mind and will, as we ourselves approach the Altar of Christ's Offering. The one spotless and perfect Offering, which God in His mercy and love has placed in the hands of sin-stained and fallen humanity is Jesus Christ the Righteous. His are the availing merits which we plead. But under the cover of that perfect Offering, we would bring the offering of ourselves, imperfect

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indeed, but striving to identify ourselves more and more with Christ, and helped in that endeavour of holiness by the same Spirit, Whose consecrating power hallows the creaturely gifts upon the Altar.

Jesus gave Himself with unsparing oblation. How can we make perfect our surrender? Not a Cross, but an Altar now calls us to generous submission, to fuller dedication, to a more thorough obedience, to a happier allegiance. The Eucharist is the great opportunity of progress in surrender. Let us come with realised purpose, with the sacrifice of ourselves, to join in the offering of Christ. And then again, when, accepted in the Beloved, we have received the great Gift and been enriched with the grace of His Sacred Humanity, once more we can make offering of ourselves, newly empowered as we are by the grace and heavenly benediction of His Presence—"we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto Thee, humbly beseeching Thee, that all we, who are partakers of this Holy Communion, may be fulfilled with Thy grace and heavenly benediction."

B.

"This is My Body." "This is My Blood." These words of Christ are the charter of sacramental grace, the pledge of His ineffable gift. We thank Him for the wonder of His lowliness, and loving condescension to our needs. We needed grace, we also needed certainty. And here in this Sacrament of His

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Kingdom we have the definite assurance of objective reality, which comes to the aid of man's hesitancy of feeling and vague emotion. The very bread which He had taken in His Hands, which He had blessed, over which He had given thanks, which He had broken, He declared to be His Body. "This is My Body." The words which He uttered were the words of Consecration. Those very elements of bread and wine which He had marked out and set apart from all other creatures of bread and wine by His holding, by His blessing, and by His distinctive declaration—"This"—became sacramentally identified with His own Body, with His own Blood, and thus He gave Himself with His own Hands to be the spiritual food of His disciples.

What Jesus did then as the Consecrator standing visibly before the disciples on the eve of His Crucifixion, He has ever continued to do after His Ascension through the ministry of His Church. He is ever the unseen Priest at every Eucharist. The priest's commission is to represent Christ, and the Church has marked this great truth by placing upon the priest's lips the very words of Christ Himself. We hear the priest to-day speaking these effective, constitutive words of the Institution as the representative of Christ. The word of Christ once more brings into operation the consecrating activities of the Holy Spirit. As in the Incarnation, it was said to the Blessed Virgin "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow

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thee," and it was the Holy Spirit Who took charge of the Sacred Humanity of our Lord, so also, in this outcome of the Incarnation, it is the Holy Spirit's function to take these creaturely elements, to hallow them and make them the vehicle of Christ's Incarnate Presence.

For the mystery of the Eucharist is the mystery of the Incarnation. Where the fulness of truth is unflinchingly held in regard to the Incarnation, there is no fresh marvel at the mystery of the Eucharist. The Sacramental Presence in the Eucharist is the natural sequel of the Divine self-limitation and self-giving in the Incarnation. The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament does not conflict with the truth of His Omnipresence. It is the very presence of His Sacred Humanity which the Incarnation was specially designed to bring. The Incarnation did not disturb the truth of Christ's Omnipresence as God, but introduced a new and special presence as Man. It is true, though it may be very hard to conceive it, that during all the days of our Lord's incarnate life upon earth, the throne of God was never deserted of the presence of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is ever "in the Bosom of the Father." He is the "Son of Man Who is in Heaven." Omnipresence is the eternal attribute of Christ as God. We are ever in His Presence, just as we are ever in Presence of the Father and the Holy Ghost. It is the Omnipresence of God that sustains the world, and is the life of all that lives. And Jesus as God has

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never for one moment lacked all the powers that belong to the coequal Father and the coequal Spirit, with Whom He is ever bound in one eternal and undivided Trinity.

This truth needs to be stated and looked at in all its wonder, in order that we may understand wherein the distinctive character of Christ's Incarnate Presence lies. The purpose of the Incarnation was to give life to our weak and sinful manhood, to provide a Humanity which shall be life-giving, not merely an example, but an instrument, of perfect life. This Humanity, joined to the Deity of Christ at the Incarnation, was perfected in glory at the Ascension. The Incarnation brought God and Man into new relations. In the unity of the Person of Christ the Godhead communicated grace and life-giving power to His Manhood. Christ's Humanity, inseparately linked to His Divine Person, became life-giving. It was not the Humanity in and by itself, however perfect, that could give life, for it was weak, as a truly created thing. But linked through the Incarnation to the Divine Person of Christ, the Sacred Humanity acquired life-giving powers. Until the Ascension, those life-giving powers of Christ were restrained within His own Sacred Person. The Ascension, by glorifying and spiritualising the powers of Christ's Manhood, made His Humanity the perfect means of giving life to others. The medium through which He "gave gifts to men" was not His Deity, but His Manhood. Christ, by taking manhood into Himself, has made His Sacred Humanity the means

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of our restoration, has provided a Presence self-limited, definite, which man can claim, and according to the terms of His own ordinance, control and take humbly into his own life, as the pledge of eternal bliss. This real presence of Christ's Sacred Humanity is the distinctive gift of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

This Eucharistic Presence is the Presence of Christ's glorified Humanity. It is the fruit of the Ascension. There is no dead Christ. The only Humanity of Christ is the living and glorified Humanity. There is, there can be, no other. The glory of the Altar is indeed the Presence of Christ's sacred and glorified Humanity, the Presence, spiritual and true, of the real Body and Blood of our Saviour, the truly created and glorified Humanity of our Lord, an actual, objective, supernatural, sacramental Presence, the mode of which transcends our understanding, the certainty of which is guaranteed by the obedience of the Church to the institution of Christ. That sacred Presence, thus granted by the lowliness of God, has in it nothing vague, nothing uncertain. All the definiteness of the First Institution clings ever to each Eucharist. In all the wonder of His humility, the Presence of Christ in the fulness of His Sacred Humanity is given there. That is why we bow and adore. That is why the Altar is Christ's earthly throne, the meeting-place of earth and heaven.

This is the gift for which we give thanks. We recall the unstinted witness of the Saints who have

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lived in the joy and power of this belief in the Sacramental Presence of Christ. This Presence of Christ effects a real union between us and the world unseen. It enables us who have been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, to taste anew of the powers of the world to come, and by this Sacramental Presence upon earth, Christ Himself prepares us for the unveiled vision of Heaven.

May it be ours, therefore, to grow in reverence for this Holy Sacrament, the blest memorial of Christ's Passion, and ever so to believe and to understand, to feel and firmly to hold, to speak and to think concerning so great a Mystery as is well-pleasing to God and for the good of our souls.

Thank God for the gift of the Holy Eucharist.

Almighty God, I heartily thank Thee, that in these Holy Mysteries Thou dost refresh and strengthen us with the Body and Blood of Thy dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. For this availing intercession, for the beauty of this worship, for the Presence of Christ, for this Memorial of His Passion, for Communion with Thy Saints, for this heavenly food, for Christ in us the hope of glory, I praise and bless Thy Holy Name. Grant, Lord, that I may so reverently treasure and so thankfully use the grace of this Communion, that I may grow in the knowledge and the love of Thee, and after this life, beholding Thee face to face, may never be parted from Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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VIII

GETHSEMANE

S. LUKE xxii. 39–46.

THROUGH the moonlit city Jesus led His disciples out beyond the brook Kedron to the Garden of Gethsemane. It was no new scene, no unwonted experience to the disciples. Often, after days of controversy, they had accompanied the Master to this quiet spot. It was His garden of prayer. But now eight of the disciples were left at the gate. S. John, S. Peter, and S. James alone were called to follow into the heart of the garden, that they might be near to the Master in His hour of need. The disciples were sorely bewildered. They followed with sadly broken hopes. S. Peter felt his sword beneath his cloak, determined to strike one blow at least for the Master's cause. Even to him the outlook was very dark. Dangers gathered fast about the Master, and He seemed to take no heed. He gave no sign. He made no attempt to meet force by force, no effort to found the kingdom of their hopes. And even now, when the time was ripe for sudden action, He was just retiring to the old place of prayer, to spend another

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night in His favourite solitude. S. Peter might foresee the coming struggle in the garden in which Jesus should be taken, he could not see the agony of the spiritual struggle in which He should be more than conqueror, despoiling Satan of his mastery over human souls, winning the kingdoms of the world for His own by right of hard-bought victory.

A.

"Tarry ye here and watch with Me." No one had witnessed Christ's conquest over Satan in the wilderness. Now Jesus would have witnesses of His completed victory, that He might stablish the hearts of the disciples, who would soon have their own cup of suffering to drink. It was a consolation and comfort to Jesus Himself to have His friends with Him at such a moment. But it was chiefly for their sakes that He called them to watch and be with Him in His agony. Surely the terrible words, "They all forsook Him and fled," would never have been written of the disciples, had they watched and realised His Passion in the garden. To these three disciples, through all the days of His ministry, had fallen the privilege of special nearness to Jesus. But the raising to life of the little daughter of Jairus had not convinced them of the Deity of Christ. Much of the glory of the Transfiguration had been lost to their sleepy gaze, and its prophecy of the Passion had passed unheeded.

Now Christ offered a last opportunity of service.

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Spent with fatigue, disappointed in heart, uncertain of hope, they had no power to rise to His call. They tarried indeed. They kept their place. But they could not watch. And Jesus bore His agony alone, with no human sympathy to cheer Him, with no human eyes to follow Him lovingly in His bitter struggle, with only the angels to watch and wonder at the Passion of God. "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Me. And I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold. Therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me." It was a victory won in utter loneliness. The way of the Cross is often a desert way. Human sympathy fails at the moment of greatest need. The failure of the disciples is repeated in our own lives. Had they been called at that moment to repel the attack of the soldiers whom Judas was bringing, they would have acquitted themselves bravely. There would have been no hesitation, no cowardice, no sleep. But it was a spiritual foe that they were asked to meet. To tarry, to watch, and to pray—this makes a far greater demand upon human endurance. The effort which the willing spirit requires for such a work is more than the weak flesh can support.

With what gentle consideration Jesus made allowance for the weakness of human nature! Yet the willing spirit can do much to inform the weak flesh with new strength. Have we the will to watch where Christ has placed us? The ready will can find a way.

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Stored at the heart of each life, ready for every need, are the forces of the indwelling Spirit. In His power we can rise to each call of Christ. The vital energies of His holy indwelling are a source of recreating power for the weakness of the body. By the arousal of that hidden vigour of the Spirit the flesh gains strength to become the obedient servant of the soul. In the power of that Spirit Jesus gave Himself to that very task to which He called the disciples. He used no miraculous powers to sustain the weakness of His manhood. He had no recourse to exceptional aids which were not within the reach of all men. He called no forces of Godhead to rescue the failing strength of human nature. If the disciples were spent, He was more spent still. But in the power of the Holy Ghost, as perfect Man, He rallied the spiritual forces of His manhood to overcome the fatigue and weakness of the body. And in that strength even the exquisite agony of the sweat of blood could not subdue the willing spirit.

How often Jesus calls us to watch when we, too, are tired and spent! How readily our prayers give way before the fatigue of the body! Faithlessly we plead weariness as an excuse for prayerlessness, when a spirit truly willing would avail amply to overcome all infirmity of the body. The disciples relied on their own strength to watch—and quickly slept. We, too, if we rely on ourselves, can never watch with Christ. But we have the indwelling power of the Spirit, informing the will, directing the mind, inspiring

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the heart, quickening the body. Confident in that strength we can meet every call of Christ. The will, reinforced by the power of the Spirit, is able to assert its control over physical weakness, to overcome fatigue, to conquer lassitude, and check distraction.

There is no power so needed for the watching life of prayer, as the "heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost." And yet how seldom we realise His help! We know that we are called to watch. God has set a power upon our intercessions. The sympathy of our wills with His, expressed in prayer, is the greatest spiritual force we can exert. Here is a way in which to vivify our prayer. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Prayer, thus offered in and through the power of the indwelling Spirit, is not only a conscious response to the call of Jesus to watch with Him to-day, it is also the confident assertion of that victory over the powers of evil which He won in the loneliness of Gethsemane. Ever, in the fellowship of saintly intercession, the Church seeks by the faithfulness and devotion of its watching in prayer, to make reparation to the lonely Christ for the desolation of Gethsemane. "Tarry ye here and watch." To contemplate Jesus praying in the Garden will not only bring us to our knees in shame of penitence and

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agony of prayer, but it will be a perpetual inspiration daily to watch with Him, tarrying in that nearness to Himself in which His love has placed us. For us, too, shall be the comfort of angelic ministries and heavenly strength, when we have borne the agony of watch and prayer.

Contemplate Jesus praying in Gethsemane.

Picture Jesus kneeling alone in the shadow of the trees See the moonlight falling on the three disciples bowed in sleep. Hear the prayer, repeated again and again through the three hours' agony. "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Think of Jesus, "exceeding sorrowful even unto death," seeking sympathy and finding none. "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" Recall the agony of His prayer, "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Think of the physical weakness. Think of the angel strengthening Him, so that He endured to the end. See His spirit issuing triumphant from the struggle. Mark His gentle consideration for the disciples, His regal advance to meet His foes. Mark the victorious power of faithful prayer. Resolve to resist, even unto blood, striving against sin, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

B.

Jesus "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." The vision of sin was before His Eyes, as He drew near to the Cross. Who can say what the awfulness of sin must be to the gaze of perfect and eternal Holiness? He saw it in all its loathly horror, a

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wanton rebellion against Love, a foul infection of human life, a degradation of the fair Holiness of God. It seemed not merely to stand before Him, clear in the naked truth of bestial grossness. It seemed, like some foul tide, to merge Him in its black and turbid waters. "He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin." Sinless, He felt all the horror of the world's sin. The shame of it bowed Him to the earth. He felt the estrangement from God which guilt brings to the soul of every sinner in the world. From the clear depths of that innocent Heart repentance for the sins of the whole world lifted its agonising cry. The bitter anguish of the God-man expiated the sins of men. Here in this agony of the sin-bearer, Jesus identified Himself with those whom He would redeem by His precious Blood. Already the first drops fell of that redeeming shower, as the great beads of blood forced themselves from His Brow and fell to the earth.

Have I this vision of the horror of sin? I can find it only in the inexpressible sorrow of Jesus. The world has its own easy estimate of that which broke the Heart of Jesus. Some would say that sin is but a blunder, a quest indeed for life, but a quest pursued in the wrong way. Others would say that sin is just a necessary, natural step in the long process of evolution, perhaps a belated survival from the animal stage, slowly but surely working itself out, a moment in the development of the great cosmic process. Sin thus becomes only an awkward attempt at goodness,

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a misdirection of effort, regrettable indeed but easily condoned. It is not God who is injured, they would say, but only man, or at the most the God in man.

But the vision of sin which Gethsemane reveals is very different from this. Sin is not an error, not just an imperfection, not a natural stage in a long process of good, not merely an offence against social well-being, but a self-determined movement of the will against God Himself, a rebellion, a desertion, a grave perversion of holiness, the most deplorable of all evils, the negation of truth, a retrograde movement in human life. "Against Thee only have I sinned." No sin is an injury to man alone. It touches the Heart of God first. Such is my own sin for which Jesus suffered. Have I seen it as He sees it? It is not merely that I have misused the powers that God has given me, and marred the bright ideal of a fruitful life, which God in His love had planned. It is not only that the effects of sin abide in my life to-day, marks of a broken progress, an unfinished development. But the sinfulness of sin lies in the personal rejection of the loving and Holy God, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier. If I cannot see my sin in itself to be so loathly and gross a thing, at least I can see the awfulness of it reflected in the agony of the Soul of Christ in Gethsemane. I can pray that the spirit of the great penitence of the Sinless One may be mine in my sinfulness. The horror of that agony was touched by the natural shrinking of the perfect Man from the unnatural issue of death. But the pain,

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that truly racked His Sacred Heart and broke the strength of that Sinless Body, was the vision of sin in its abysmal awfulness and doom.

C.

"Not My will, but Thine be done." This is the expression of that obedience which lies at the heart of Christ's Atonement. The great work of Jesus was to bring the erring, wayward will of man into stedfast union with the Will of God. His human life was the revelation of perfect obedience. By disobedience sin entered into the world. By the obedience of Christ sin was conquered. The gift of free will, with all its risks, had been the gift of Divine Love. Infinite Love asked for answering love. Without freedom there could be no love. The very first condition of the possibility of love is freedom of will. So God had made man free. And man had fallen from his obedience, and used his great gift to his undoing. Jesus came to reveal the perfection of manhood as flawless, unbroken obedience to the Father's Will. "Lo, I come to do Thy Will." With a supreme effort of stedfastness Jesus bound His human will to the Divine Will, holding it fast to the Will of God through all vicissitudes and temptations.

Prayer was the great expression of that obedience, for prayer meant to Him the rising up of the human will into union with the Will of God. In this prayer of the three hours in Gethsemane was the crisis of the obedience of a lifetime. It was Satan's last

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effort to break the atoning power of an impregnable obedience. The obedience which had defied the temptations of the wilderness had remained true through all the experiences of the public Ministry. Flattery, success, failure, rejection, calumny, misunderstanding, treachery, persecution—all alike had failed to break that obedience. And now there was the call of the Cross. Might that suffice, with all its suffering and shame, to turn Him at length from obedience to the Father's Will? Might the stedfastness of that obedient Humanity be shaken by the terrors of death? No. He Who had humbled Himself and was found in fashion as a man, became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

The essence of Christ's sacrifice, extending through all the acts of His life, lay in His perfect Obedience. It was not the death, as death, but the death as obedience, which constituted the Sacrifice of the Cross. To this supreme Sacrifice Jesus dedicated Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane. The fruit of the three hours' agony was a perfected oblation of the Will, a victorious and triumphant approach to the Cross.

If obedience was for Jesus Himself the way of Atonement, it is by obedience that we must apply to ourselves the benefits of His atoning Death. Prayer will be for us the glad surrender of our wills in obedience to the Divine Will. In simple and faithful obedience to His Will, we submit ourselves to the

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lowliness of Christ's sacramental approach. By the power of the Spirit we gain something of the majestic self-control that marked the obedience of Christ. We, too, make the supreme effort of obedience and follow the guidance of His Church. Through persecution and ridicule we press on, upholding the law of holiness which He has given us, in the face of a hostile world. The way of obedience is assuredly the way of peace. For we may be sure that, as in the multitude of sorrows that Jesus had in His Heart, the Divine comfort refreshed His Soul, so also shall we in our obedience be refreshed with the multitude of peace.

Pray for the Spirit of obedience.

O Blessed Spirit of God, Fount of Wisdom and of Love, lead me day by day in the way of obedience to the Will of God, that, growing in the love of Jesus, I may go from strength to strength, and triumphing in the power of the Cross, may receive the benediction of Peace.

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IX

BEFORE CAIAPHAS

S. JOHN xviii. 12–27.

"I LAY down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." Jesus gave Himself willingly into the hands of His captors and restrained the passionate defence of His Apostles, while He made provision for their escape. Startled by the treachery of Judas, amazed at the suddenness of the arrest, and bewildered by the Master's surrender, they all forsook Him and fled. And Jesus was led away bound to the house of Annas.

A.

Annas represented Sadducean worldliness in its extreme form. Wealthy, unscrupulous, irreligious, vindictive, he controlled the political life of Jerusalem, while he amassed a vast revenue from the traffic in the Temple. To him Jesus was first brought. It was he who had planned the arrest. It was he whose interests had been injured by the purification of the Temple, whose authority was challenged by every word of Christ's teaching in its courts. Caiaphas was his son-in-law and his tool. Caiaphas indeed

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exercised the powers of the High Priesthood, which Annas had procured for him eleven years before, but it was still the ex-high-priest Annas who ruled. He would see the Prisoner to make sure of the success of his plans, to mark the spirit in which Christ met His defeat, to decide finally upon the course of His trial, to satisfy, it may be, his hatred by seeing Jesus in bonds.

As we picture Jesus before this typical representative of apostate Jerusalem, we may pray to be delivered from that spirit of luxury and worldliness which was blinding the eyes of Annas to the vision of Holiness and Truth. To the view of Annas, Jesus stood a captive bound at his command. The protest of Holiness was hushed, the voice of Truth was stilled. But to our gaze, the fetters that held Jesus bound were not the fetters of man's violence, but the chains of Divine Love. Jesus had bound Himself with bonds of love when He gave Himself to the soldiers' cords. It was for love of us that He suffered Himself to be bound as a thief, that He might expiate our sins, a prisoner of love, and bestow upon us the liberty of the children of God. The binding of Jesus is our freedom, our freedom to follow Him in the captivity of love. Shall we not also, in the Spirit of His holy obedience and tranquil faith, suffer ourselves to be bound with His fetters, and accept with gentleness the indignities, the restraints, the sufferings which the world inflicts, rather than stand free in the false liberty of irreligion and worldliness?

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B.

"Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest." The trial must be conducted openly in the court of the Sanhedrin over which the high priest presided. In Caiaphas was summed up the implacable hostility of the rulers of the Jews to the authority and teaching of Jesus. Sadducee though he was, he was able to range together in one unbroken phalanx of opposition the most formidable and passionate elements of all the political and religious parties in Jerusalem. An astute diplomatist, supported by the most powerful influences in the city, unscrupulous in his abuse of power, Caiaphas had every hope of the speedy success of his attack upon Jesus.

He asked Him of His disciples and of His doctrine. Of His disciples Jesus had no word to say. He had provided for their safety when He himself was arrested. He would not involve them now in His condemnation. At that very moment one disciple stood actually within the hall of Caiaphas, and another was in the courtyard. In the council chamber S. John spoke no word of apology, protest or defence. By the fire without, S. Peter denied that he ever knew Him. Questioned as to His disciples, Jesus was silent. Asked of His doctrine, Jesus would not repeat to incredulous ears the solemn truths, which He had so frequently uttered in the public places of Jerusalem. There was no mystery which He had not openly proclaimed. "I spake openly to the world. I ever taught in the

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synagogue and in the Temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing." Caiaphas had hoped for an immediate declaration which might have been proclaimed at once as blasphemy. But there were other means. False witnesses were called. Even so it was difficult to find formal grounds for conviction. The falsehoods were too various and too free, they became self-contradictory. At last the necessary verbal agreement was found. But still Jesus maintained a tranquil and majestic silence. No fury of falsehood could move Him to passionate reply. Then Caiaphas left the chicanery of the lawyer and resorted to the religious weapon of solemn adjuration, which belonged to his high-priestly office. "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." To this appeal, made with all the sanctity which belonged to the high priest of God, Jesus solemnly made reply. "Thou hast said. Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." His enemies could ask for nothing more. Out of His own mouth they convicted Him of blasphemy. He was guilty of death.

For a while the Prisoner was set aside and subjected to the indignities and mocking insults of the high priest's officers. "The man that held Jesus mocked Him and smote Him." Meantime the full Sanhedrin was gathering, and almost immediately

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the decision of Caiaphas was ratified by the whole assembly. But the power of death could only be exercised with the approval of the Roman Governor. Caiaphas had no mind to accept any issue but death; and that speedily, for the imminence of the Festival and the temper of the people alike forbade delay. So "the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate."

C.

The most eloquent voice that reaches us to-day out of the hall of Caiaphas is the Silence of Jesus. He was silent about His disciples. He would not expose publicly their broken loyalty, their frailty and ingratitude, in the moment of their great weakness. He would be silent about them, when He could not praise. How different is our silence! We are silent when praise is due, eloquent when fault may be found. How careless we are of the reputation of others, even of our friends! How we need to learn to throw the veil of silence over those things which do not redound to their credit! Criticism, offered by us in the spirit of gentleness, may become on the lips of others both untrue and unkind. How sternly we need to school ourselves to kind and generous silence! It is not that we deliberately wish to hurt others. Probably that is far from our intention. But we are moved by the secret stirrings of pride and self-regard to show the intimacy of our knowledge, the subtlety of our insight, or the superiority of our own conduct. Thus

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self poisons the speech. And the characters of others suffer. Beware of being drawn into the discussion of others. It is so seldom free from grave and subtle spiritual sins. Save the criticism for the ears of Jesus. He will not misunderstand. Indeed when we come into His Presence, we cannot utter it. For the vision of Him opens to us our own unworthiness, and there are no sins but ours to tell to Him. The spirit of holy Intercession burns out all the dross of selfishness and unkindness in our remembrance of others before God. In the light that streams from the Face of Jesus we see our friends as Jesus sees them, with eyes of faith and charity and evergrowing hope.

Jesus was silent also under the scourge of cruel calumny and wilful misrepresentation. We can imagine the untruths that the false witnesses uttered, slanders upon the love of the Father, blasphemous distortions of the work and teaching of the Son, ignorant falsehoods about the Person of the Holy Ghost. Yet Jesus bore all in silence. He heard His own most sacred teaching perverted, His own character maligned, His truthfulness impeached. Yet He answered nothing. With invincible patience He suffered all these accusations in unbroken silence. Already there stirred unspoken in His Heart that prayer with which He broke the silence of the Cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Jesus, meek and calm before His accusers, bearing Himself in noble silence before the spiteful malice of

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His enemies—this is the picture that we need to treasure for the moments of our own temptation. How ready we are to leap to the vindication of ourselves at the first breath of calumny! Here in the hall of Caiaphas we learn that silence under insult and accusation is the way of the Saviour. How ample might have been His self-vindication! But He thought of the glory of the Father, He waited upon His Will. So we, seeking the glory of God and not the good fame of ourselves, will meet the accusations of personal malice with silence. Our vindication we will leave to God. He will care for us, He will be jealous for His own with a holy jealousy. God will justify His children. Patiently we will tarry His leisure and suffer in humble silence, praying that it may turn to His glory. Only if our silence does despite to the glory of God, will we give ourselves to speech, and then with earnest prayer to the Holy Ghost for guidance and courage. There is no harder test of humility and faith than to be silent in the face of false accusation. Only as the wondrous spirit of the Passion passes into our lives, can we thus "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His Body's sake which is the Church," and suffer in holy silence.

Silent we must be about others, patient under calumny, yet when our faith is challenged we must speak. Adjured by the high priest to speak the truth of God, Jesus answered fearlessly. Then silence would have been betrayal of the truth, denial of God.

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And Jesus spoke boldly, uttering the words of truth which He knew would lead Him to the Cross. We must be ready to bear witness to God, to testify to the faith of the Church, to "give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Yes, with meekness and fear, for we need the grace of the Holy Ghost at such moments to guide us in the way of truth, and to temper our boldness with humility. If silence in one case is difficult, speech in the other is equally difficult, and only in trustful reliance on the Spirit's help, assured that our ruling motive is the glory of God, can we fearlessly break the silence and speak for Christ.

Pray for consecration of speech.

Almighty and everloving God, grant that the Spirit of truth and of love may guide me into all truth and keep me from all unkindness of thought and word and deed. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and keep the door of my lips. Grant that I may be gentle in speech and silent under provocation. Cast out from me all malice and whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie, that I may ever speak the truth in love, for His sake, who is the Truth, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

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X

S. PETER

S. LUKE xxii. 54–62.

WHILE Jesus stood before Caiaphas and by His silence shielded His followers from harm, the most enthusiastic of His disciples was denying Him with oaths in the courtyard of the palace. It was not a week since S. Peter had said, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." This was the disciple whom Jesus had chosen, not merely as an Apostle, but as a leader of Apostles. "Thou art Simon, thou shalt be called Cephas"—the Rock; these were the words with which Jesus had received him. And He knew what was in man. The Divine Hope was not to be frustrated. Wisdom should be justified of all her children. As we watch S. Peter "following afar off" during the Passion, we see how the Love of God with infinite patience and undying hope, waits upon us in our moments of weakness, and calls us back to our allegiance.

A.

For this moment of the Passion Jesus had striven continually to prepare S. Peter. The natural endowments

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of the Apostle were great. He was full of enthusiasm, sanguine, cheerful, abounding in spirits, frank and candid, with no reserves, no secrets, made for fellowship, seeking the fulness of life in the happiness of true companionship, free from all the infirmities of petty selfishness, a hero-worshipper, a lover of beauty and honour. These were gifts of rare promise. But they needed consecration at the altar of Divine Love. They needed conscious surrender to the Power and Wisdom of God. Before the Passion S. Peter had never made that surrender. No one could have been more devoted to the service of his Master. He gave himself without stint to serve Jesus in all the simple duties of the day. Nothing pleased him more than to sail his boat for the Master, to care for His comfort, to anticipate His needs, to champion His supreme claims to love and obedience. But in all his service S. Peter was really self-centred. He was satisfied with his own interpretation of life. He never tried to enter into Christ's view of life. Though he seemed so dependent on Christ, it was really his own selfish desires that he was gratifying. It was the hero-worship of one who found satisfaction in the admiring service of others. He had no imagination. He lacked the basis of all true sympathy—the power to appreciate another's point of view. He never waited to think. Impulse carried him away. So he misunderstood Christ. It was a different misconception from that of Judas, though it led almost to a like treachery.

What S. Peter missed was that care for others,

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which showed itself in the Divine thirst for souls. He only wanted Jesus to be happy, to move in comfort and in honour. Of that passionate thirst for the souls of men which inspired our Lord, S. Peter knew nothing. Nor could he understand the Divine necessity of sacrifice. Suffering was altogether removed from his ideal of the Master's life. In all this he had, as our Lord said, the thoughts of men and not the thoughts of God. He had not entered into the inner mind and purpose of Christ. "That be far from Thee," he had said when Jesus foretold His suffering. So he lived in his own world, put his own construction on Christ's words, and refused to see the stern realities which faced him.

In this spirit S. Peter approached the Passion. He had no true self-knowledge because he had no insight into the mind of Christ. Twice Jesus had given him special warning, both in the Upper Room and at Gethsemane. When He had washed the Apostles' feet, the lesson in humility was lost to S. Peter. When Jesus had spoken of the betrayal, S. Peter's conscience never pricked him. He prompted S. John to ask who it was. No dreadful fear crossed his mind as he asked "Is it I?" And at Gethsemane Christ called him to think of deeper things, to watch and to pray, but he slept. Of spiritual foes he had no knowledge; he saw no others. So he slept and was awakened by Christ when Judas and the soldiers were upon them. Then he acted readily enough, but Jesus stayed his passionate defence. Then in the

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panic of the moment S. Peter forsook Him and fled. He fled, but he could not flee far. He returned and followed to the palace of the high priest. Thus he found himself with the Apostle of love within the precincts of the hall of Caiaphas. Here sudden temptation found him unready. Thrice he miserably denied his Lord. The treachery was a revelation, which shook his self-ignorance and filled him with shame of self.

At that very moment of utter shame Jesus was led through the court, a prisoner, bound and mocked. How could he dare to look? But the old affection drew him and the compelling eye of the Master held him. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." It was the crowning moment of the disciple's life. There in that gaze of Christ he saw, not anger, not contempt, but unconquered love. There in that look flashed the very spirit of the Passion—love triumphing over sin. It was that look of Divine Love and Hope that broke down the Apostle's last defence. His self-confidence was gone. It made him think first of Jesus. A new wonder came to him as he saw the majesty of that look. It was not the look of a beaten hero, going to an unexpected death. In all His pitiful prisoner's garb, Jesus bore Himself as a conqueror. This was not the defeat which the Apostle had pictured. There was a future yet of hope. That look brought an individual message of trust and love. It stirred all that was noble in S. Peter. In the hot flush of shame, in the

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renewed hope of Christ's unshaken love, S. Peter came to himself at last, weeping the bitter-sweet tears of first repentance.

B.

The penitence of S. Peter helps us to see that the root of repentance is love. Penitence is love for a God Who is holy. S. Peter's tears of repentance flowed when love for our Lord had awakened in his heart. Sorrow and shame were there, but the essence of his penitential act was his love, rising in answer to the realised love of Jesus. Penitence is often described as sorrow for sin; godly sorrow, sorrow felt because sin has grieved God Himself. And sorrow for sin is the marked characteristic of penitence. But sorrow is not the heart of penitence. The heart of penitence is love. Penitence is an active passion of love for the God of Love and Holiness. Love is the positive side of penitence, while sorrow is the negative. And in the spiritual life it is more effective, as well as more true to first principles, to dwell on the positive than on the negative side. For while the positive aspect invites activity and stimulates hope, the negative is apt to depress and lead to morbid inaction. So the secret of penitence lies in the recognition of God as the God of Love. "We love Him, because He first loved us." The vision of God is the vision not only of Holiness, but of Love. And the vision of God is ever the spring of penitence. "They shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced,

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and they shall mourn." The sorrow of penitence is the fruit of love. There can be no sorrow apart from love. Sorrow springs from love and passes back into love. Sorrow is transient and temporal, but love is eternal.

The signs of love, then, are what we must look for in our penitence. God is looked at by the penitent as Love. It was Love which S. Peter read in the eyes of Jesus. It is God's Love which accepts our confession, weak and unworthy though it be. It is our love of the holy God that makes us definitely repudiate all that we know to be unworthy of His Love and contrary to His law of Holiness. We express that repudiation in simple words of earnest determination, of heartfelt sorrow, of awakened love. It is the whole offering of which at the moment we are capable. The penitence is not such as it will be one day, when we have come nearer to God. It is not perfect yet. But it is as perfect as we can make it. It is the best we can offer. And the Love of God accepts it. Struggling, imperfect, indeterminate, and dim of vision was the penitence of the Apostle, as he wept bitterly in the porch of the high priest. Such as it was, it had been fired by the loving look of Jesus. The Love of Jesus accepted him, as he was, just coming to the knowledge of himself, uncertain, shamed, and sorrowful, and led him gently on to the stable happiness of a perfect penitence.

And if love rules the ordering of our actual confession and God's acceptance of our imperfect effort,

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love also is the secret of our contrition. We are sorry for our sin because we love God. No other reason can suffice to make us contrite. It is the office of the Holy Ghost to inspire that contrite love, for it is He by Whom "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," and the fruit of His indwelling is love. It is not love of self that makes us contrite, but love of God. No mere remorse, no mere shame at our failure, no sorrow for shattered ideals can meet the needs of penitence. It must be sorrow, born of love for God alone. Against Thee only have I sinned, O God of Love and Holiness.

The first question, then, to ask is not "Have I sufficient sense of sin?" but "Do I love God?" The way to find the deeper sense of sin, which is, indeed, the mark of growing holiness, is to grow in the love of God. S. Peter lived his life up to the Passion, singularly irresponsive to the sense of sin. The vision of sin in all its gravity and horror, which oppressed the Master's soul, was unknown to the disciple. It was love that opened his eyes. It was love that brought tears of contrition. And the signs of love are not hard to read. They are seen in deliberate purpose of amendment and resolution to serve God more faithfully. It is not the measure of emotional sorrow for sin that gauges the reality of our contrition, but the stedfastness of will with which we set ourselves to obedience. In our act of will, which constitutes our amendment, we assert our love of God's Will in its entirety, and our resolve at all cost to live

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in conformity to His Holy Will. We cannot choose one part of God's Will for acceptance, while we neglect the rest. We must set ourselves, out of love for God, to fulfil all that we know of His Will, without reserve. And for the achievement of such a great resolve we depend upon the grace of the indwelling Spirit of Love. What that Holy Spirit can effect in the penitent heart, we see in the restored S. Peter after the Day of Pentecost. It is the re-making of the life, the consecration of all natural gifts, the transfiguring of all natural endowments in the happy service of God.

And if our penitence is a work of love, the forgiveness of God is the supreme manifestation of the Love of God. Wonderfully, beyond all imagination, the pardoning grace of God endows the soul with new hope, with new life, with new powers of manifold activity and happiness. Beyond all understanding is this gift of the Divine Love. But not beyond the acceptance of faith. At the very moment when the soul is most conscious of its unworthiness, of its infirmity and sin, God asks us to make a great act of faith in the reality and fulness of His pardon, whereby the soul is re-created in all the elements of holiness, accepted in the Beloved, and empowered with all the victorious energies of the Holy Spirit. Such is God's great act of love, whereby He restores the penitent to life and hope and joy in the service of Christ.

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Pray for a deeper love of God.

O Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, hold my will fast to Thine, that I may cease from all anxious care and may live in the power of Thy grace. Reveal Thy Love to me more and more. Make me to care only that Thou lovest me, and may Thy Holy Spirit make me more worthy of Thy Love, to the honour and glory of the Father, God Almighty.

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XI

BEFORE PILATE

S. JOHN xviii. 28—xix. 16.

FROM the hall of Caiaphas Jesus was hurried to the palace of the Roman governor. It was hoped that he would at once give way to the demand of the Sanhedrin and command the execution of the Prisoner. In tumultuous throng the chief priests and the multitude besieged the judgment-seat of Pilate. But Pilate was otherwise minded. He had no good will for the Jewish rulers at any time. The Jews were notoriously a difficult people to govern. On every opportunity they showed themselves restless and intractable. Pilate held them in check with a high hand, and had not hesitated to shed blood in his quarrels with them. Both with people and with rulers he returned hate for hate. One thing only he feared, the enmity of the jealous and morosely suspicious Cæsar who reigned at Rome. At no time was Pilate a great man. Supercilious, conscious of power, a crafty diplomat, a ruthless soldier, he embodied the pride and justice of Rome in the presence of her provincial subjects. And Pilate in Passover week

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at Jerusalem was Pilate at his worst. This was the judge before whom Jesus was brought by the leaders of the nation.

A.

Pilate was not prepared to accept the demand of the Jews without personal inquiry. In hurried consultation they were required to formulate their definite charges. They accused Jesus of perverting the nation, of forbidding tribute, of claiming to be King. It was really because He refused to be King in the sense in which Pilate understood the term, that they had brought Him to be condemned. Partly in order to get free from the crowd, partly that he might gain a closer view of Jesus, Pilate took Him alone within the palace and questioned Him of His Kingship. The interest of this private audience lies in the way in which Jesus appealed to the conscience of the Governor. Pilate was convinced of His innocence. In the presence of the King of Truth, truth struggled for victory in Pilate's heart. He felt the power of Christ's majestic appeal. He tried to give expression to the truth: "I find no fault in Him." But the clamour of the people was hard to refuse. The priests had skilfully stirred them up to fanatical fierceness, and Pilate would fain prevent an outbreak which might easily place him in an equivocal position. He seized on the mention of Herod as a happy way of escape. But Herod gave no help. He interrogated Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate. Meantime the

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people grew more restless. Pilate conceived the astute plan of releasing Jesus, as his wonted festival gift to the people. But his schemes were overthrown by the unexpected popular choice of Barabbas. They cried loudly for the crucifixion of Jesus. Before that popular tumult Pilate quailed. He would wash his hands of this foul deed, while he actually gave the innocent to death. One last appeal he sought to make. He presented the Saviour, now scourged and crowned with thorns, before the people with the cry, "Behold the Man," hoping to make successful appeal to the pity of the mob. But a mob is pitiless, and Pilate as well as Jesus felt its fury. Their cry, "By our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God" roused in him superstitious fear. He called Jesus aside again and asked "Whence art Thou?" But He who had confessed Himself the King of Truth has no answer now. Only they that were of the truth could hear His voice, and Pilate had rejected the Truth. Pilate would not have understood in any but a pagan sense our Lord's declaration of His heavenly origin. Jesus had no will to be released on any grounds but that of the innocence of His Manhood. So He remained silent as to His Deity, while in tones of quiet authority He acquitted Pilate of the greater guilt in His condemnation. Once more the Governor was moved by the sense of Christ's innocence. He sought again to set Him free. But his courage died away before the fateful cry of the people, "Thou art not Cæsar's friend." He saw

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himself recalled to Rome. He saw himself impeached and heard his long record of misrule rehearsed. He saw the frown of Cæsar and knew himself disgraced. This was the threat which stayed the justice of Pilate and made him false to conscience and to truth. "He released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will."

Make a resolution of sincerity and truth.

Think how past sins now hold you back from God. Recall how they have held you in thrall these many years. Think how God has given you opportunities of breaking away, but courage has failed you. Think how the bondage has grown with each fresh refusal to be free. Believe that in the power of the Spirit you can dare to be true to that self which has been so long hidden. Jesus presents Himself for judgment. Each fresh insincerity, each fresh unworthiness, each fresh repression of the true self, is a denial of Jesus, the King of Truth, a condemnation of the Redeemer. Put away the fear of men. Resolve to prove your manhood. Clear away the imbecilities of ignorance and indecision. See yourself as Jesus sees you. Make earnest confession. Resolve on courageous amendment. Shrink from no pain, from no change of habit or of company or of life, which the faithful following of Christ demands. Accept His forgiveness and live in the power of His absolution, renewed in life and hope.

B.

"Behold the Man." This is the pregnant, unconscious witness of Pilate to the glory of the Passion. We contemplate in Jesus the adorable perfection of Humanity. He is the Universal Man, the new Head of the race. In Him all mankind is summed up, and

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summed up in the glory of its ideal perfection. He represented Manhood as it was in the design and purpose of God, not as it had become by the weakness and sin of man. The Eternal Son of God, becoming Incarnate, allied to His Divine Person, not another human person, but human nature in its entirety. The Humanity, which He took, had in it nothing that was local, or particular to one time or place. It was universal. In that Humanity which Jesus bore we see ourselves. He is the Second Adam, the Representative, Ideal, Pattern Man. God used that Humanity of His Son as the great organ and instrument of Redemption. "The Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." God has chosen to act towards us through the Humanity of Christ. It was that Humanity in which Jesus revealed the Love of the Father, by word and suffering and deed. It was that Humanity which was given to Death for our atonement. The Death of Jesus has become an atonement available for us who did not actually die upon the Cross, because He, who did die there, was one with us in the fellowship of human nature. The offering which He made was the offering of universal, sinless, obedient, Humanity. The Eternal Father looking on Him beheld the whole human race.

Thus Humanity was used by Christ the Mediator as the organ of union, the instrument of fellowship with God. Not only is He, in the power of His true Manhood, the revealer of the Father, the pattern of

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holy life, the exemplar of human conformity to the Will of God; but He is the means of union between man and God. Not only truth, but grace came by Jesus Christ the Incarnate. So Jesus loved to call Himself the Son of Man. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." His Sacred Humanity is the means of our fellowship with God. That Humanity, which has passed through death and received the power of the Resurrection-life, and the glory of the Ascension, is imparted to us in the sacraments of God's grace, so that we may be incorporated into Christ by a real, substantial union of life.

Through impartation of that Humanity we are "in Christ." The merits of Christ's atoning Death, the virtue of His Passion, the grace of His precious Blood-shedding pass to us, who are thus made one with Him. That union, begun at Baptism, grows into a living, vital fellowship, which absorbs and transfigures all the faculties of life; Christ in us is the hope of glory. It is, therefore, no immoral substitution of the merits of the Sinless for the guilt of the sinful, that the Christian doctrine of the Atonement proclaims. No violence is done to the highest human instincts of justice and truth. The sacrifice of Christ's obedience unto death can avail to affect us vitally, because there is a real unity between Christ and

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ourselves. There is a true solidarity of race. We are members one of another. By taking our human nature, Jesus has used that very constitution of our manhood which had availed to transmit sin, and made it the instrument of redemption. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." There is no illogical substitution in the grace of the Atonement, but there is the impartation of the life of Christ Himself by the gift of His Sacred Humanity, so that we are actually one with Him in a real and vital fellowship.

Through that growing union the graces of His Perfect Life are gradually communicated to us. Slowly we rise to the Divine ideal. But through all the stages of development God ever sees the perfection towards which we are tending in the power of our fellowship with Christ. God sees Christ in us, and deals ever with us, not as we now are, but as we are going to be. For us there is a present and a future. To God all is a timeless present, and what He sees is reality. The vision that God has of us in Christ is the true vision of what we really are. "No man can come to Me except the Father, Which hath sent Me, draw Him. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me." If it is, then, the Father's will that by the sacred Humanity of His dear Son we should be drawn into fellowship with Him, how can we doubt that He rejoices ever to see in us the image of His Son, to

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forgive us, to bless us, to enrich us with the gifts of His Love, to lead us from glory to glory by the power of the Holy Spirit, because we are "accepted in the Beloved"?

Contemplate Christ in you the hope of glory.

Behold the Man. Do not merely look up with worship and awe to the beauty of that perfect Life. Do not merely with Pilate acknowledge Christ's sinlessness and confess the sovereign supremacy of His Person. But look within your own life. See there the glory of His perfect Humanity transfiguring your soul, as the grace of the Altar fills you with the fruits of His atoning Death. Contemplate this as the very purpose of the Death to which He gave Himself, as Pilate presented Him to the people. "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which beholdeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Behold the Man. Behold the Son, and believe on Him, and accept the gift of everlasting life and the promise of the resurrection, which, through the Sacred Manhood of His Son, God has bestowed upon those who are in Christ.

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XII

THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST

S. MATTHEW xxvi. 67, 68; xxvii. 29–31; S. LUKE xxiii. 11; S. JOHN xix. 1–3.

THE most exquisite and bitter suffering of Christ in the Passion was the agony of soul which He endured as He gazed upon the sin of the whole world. Into the mysterious depths of that Divine sorrow we may not penetrate. It lies beyond our reach. Even at our holiest moments we can enter but little into that region of profound spiritual sympathy and ineffable vision. The Gospels, perforce, say very little of that suffering, which even the Apostles could so poorly grasp. Our Lord Himself only reveals it in a few brief words which here and there break the silence of the Passion.

But of the bodily suffering of Christ there is ample record. And that we can more fully understand. We can believe that the very perfection of His human Body gave to Jesus greater capacity of suffering. We see that there was no part of His Sacred Body which did not share in the painful expiation of man's sin. To recall the suffering of those last hours is to marvel at His endurance. Upon the three hours' agony in

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the Garden followed the rude arrest. He was bound and carried off to Annas. In the hall of Caiaphas He was beaten and mocked. Dragged before Pilate, He was soon marched away to the palace of Herod. There He was made the sport of the soldiers. Brought back to the Prætorium, Jesus was scourged at the command of Pilate with all the brutal severity of a punishment under the violence of which prisoners often died. Mocked once more by the soldiers, wearing still the crown of thorns, He was led forth bearing the Cross. Spent with suffering and weakness He fell beneath its weight. At Calvary followed all the exquisite agony of the pierced Hands and Feet, the long-drawn pains of Crucifixion in the heat of the mid-day sun.

With such cruel sufferings, Jesus, hast Thou paid the penalty in Thy Sinless Body for all the evil that we have done. It is my sin that has scourged Thee. Mine is the hand that has buffeted Thy sacred Face. Mine is the mouth that has blasphemed and mocked Thee. It is I that plaited the crown of thorns, and nailed Thee to the Cross. And for me Thou hast died. If thus Thou hast suffered and died, Sinless and Loving Lord, what ought not I readily to suffer, that my body may be wholly Thine, free from all evil impulse, holy and consecrated to Thy service?

A.

"Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment." Picture the sacred

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Head of Jesus exposed to the indignities and sufferings of the Passion. It is in that Face that we are to seek "the light of the glory of the knowledge of God." There we behold suffering made glorious. It is the glory of suffering for which the years of a lifetime had prepared Him. We picture the gentle beauty of the sacred Head pillowed in infancy on the breast of Mary. We see the Virgin Mother gazing into the wondrous depth of her Child's eyes. How they must have revealed to the pondering Mother unfathomable depths of beauty, flashing back to her a love that no words could utter! We can recall the tradition of Nazareth, how that in moments of trouble and sorrow the villagers would go to the house of Joseph, saying, "Let us look upon the Face of Mary's Son," and gazing on the sweetness of Jesus would find comfort and peace. We think of Jesus going forth from the home of Nazareth, having nowhere to lay His Head. We recall the frequent night watches, with their agonies of prayer, leaving their traces of peaceful weariness upon His Face. With what attractive beauty of compassion had those Eyes gazed upon the sick and welcomed the sinner! How men had loved to watch the gracious movement of those Lips, speaking as never man spake! Before the stern majesty of that compelling look, the crowds at Jerusalem and at Nazareth, the soldiers at Gethsemane, had given way. He had looked upon the young ruler, and beholding him had loved him. With indignation He had looked round upon the hypocrites

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of the synagogue, marvelling at their hardness of heart. He had gazed upon the Holy City and wept over the house left desolate and the day of visitation passed unheeded. He had looked upon S. Peter and had awaked penitence with His look of love.

And now the thorns pierce His bleeding Brow, and that Face is "marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." The rough hands of the officers of Caiaphas, the scourge of the soldiers of Pilate, the cruel mockery of the court of Herod, have left their marks of blood upon His sacred Face. We are gazing upon the suffering of Him Who is God Eternal. We bow before the mystery of a suffering God, as we realise and picture the fact of Christ's endurance. When He accepts death for man, He accepts it in all its horror. Not with one brief spasm of pain willed He to die, but with long-drawn suffering, with violence which beat down the endurance of a perfect body in the prime of life, Christ would pass to death through the final agony of the Cross.

With the crown of thorns Christ expiated all sins of the intellect, all misuse of imagination, all unconsecrated subtlety of thought. For all the wilful errors of genius, for all the conceits of intellectual pride, the presumption of reason, the undisciplined arrogance of thought, the irreverences of fancy—for all the intellectual sins of the ages, Christ bore the crown of thorns. And, in presence of His suffering to-day, we would offer to God the service of our mind in all its fulness, hallowed by the power of His blessed Spirit

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of Wisdom, "casting down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Plead the merits of Christ's Passion.

Jesus, my Lord, Who didst will that Thy glorious Head should be wreathed with the painful crown of thorns, forgive me all the wrong that I have done by evil thought, by want of thought, by pride of thought, by unkind thought. Thou, Who didst suffer Thy blessed Face to be buffeted, spit upon, disfigured by the soldiers' blows, forgive me all the sin which I have wrought by looks of unkindness, passion, discontent and pride. Thou, Who through the agonies of the Passion didst keep silence and openedst not Thy Mouth, forgive me all my sins of speech, words of untruth, unkindness and conceit. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and keep the door of my lips.

B.

"They crucified Him." Think of the suffering of Jesus as He was nailed unresisting to the Cross. Think of His tortured Hands. To the Virgin Mother at the foot of the Cross, did it seem long since the soft Hands of her little Child had tenderly caressed her cheek and smoothed away her cares? Those were the Hands that had worked so patiently at the carpenter's bench for her support, and for all time had given dignity and consecration to the labour of men. How many could recall the loving ministry of those Hands, vehicles of Divine virtue and strength, bringing health to the sick and ease to the suffering! How many had lived to thank the benediction of

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those Hands for gifts untold of peace and happiness! In the shelter of those Arms had nestled the little ones whom the Saviour had called to Himself. Under the benediction of those Hands the few loaves had been wondrously multiplied to feed the thousands in their need. Those Hands had blessed the Eucharistic Bread and given to the disciples the Eucharistic Cup. Ever in works of mercy and of love those Hands had been dedicated ungrudgingly to the service of men. And now—unworthy requital of sinful men—fettered and bound, Jesus had been led from court to court. The reed, mock emblem of sovereignty, had been thrust into His Hand. With failing grasp those Hands had borne the heavy Cross until He fell. Think of Jesus as He hung, with pierced Hands bleeding from the cruel nails, with aching Arms extended on the Cross, symbol of the eternal intercession which even in agony and death could never fail.

And at the thought of that expiation of our sin, we pray that we may dedicate our hands to holy work and loving service. Shall not our hands be raised in frequent intercession in His Name? Can we not heal and help? Can we not work with thoroughness and zeal? Can we not delight in the task which God has given us? Shall we not lift the burden of others and help to bear their cross? There is but one writing that we know of Christ's. He wrote upon the dust with Fingers of love, and freeing the woman taken in sin sent her

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to a life of holiness. To-day our busy fingers write incessantly. Do they write words of love and gentleness? In all the work of our hands we pray for the blessing of the Crucified. For in those pierced Hands is the sovereignty of the world and the benediction of the universe. Those Hands are raised in blessing still. O Lord, Thou openest Thine Hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness. Into Thy Hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth.

Plead the merits of Christ's suffering.

Jesu, my Lord, Who didst suffer Thy sacred Hands to be pierced through with the iron nails, forgive me all the evil which my hands have wrought, forgive the imperfection of my work, my want of service. Thou, Who didst suffer Thy blessed Feet to be nailed to the Cross, forgive all the wanderings of my feet, that have not gone upon the errands of Thy mercy, nor borne me upon the duties of Thy service, but have strayed into paths of selfishness and sin. Thou, Who didst bear Thy Cross till human strength failed Thee and Thou didst sink beneath its weight, forgive all my refusal to bear my Cross daily, following Thee.

C.

"One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and straightway there came out blood and water." Who can tell the sorrows of the Heart of Jesus? He Who is "ever in the bosom of the Father," reveals the Heart of God. We think of the love of the Child Jesus, lying Heart to heart with the holy Mother. We think of the thirty years of unrecorded happiness in the home at Nazareth. We see the Love of Jesus

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calling the disciples, binding them to Him with the cords of true human affection. We know the joy of the disciple who lay upon His Breast. We mark the vehemence of that Love which drove Jesus along the path of sacrifice. How gladly He welcomed the response of affection in those who drew near to Him in the intercourse of friendship! How truly that Heart sought sympathy! "Will ye also go away?" "Tarry ye here and watch." Think of His friends—Mary and Martha and Lazarus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathæa, the Disciples. How Jesus opened His Heart to them and enriched their lives with His love! We think of the sorrowing Heart of Jesus, as He saw the conquests of sin and knew the ravages of Satan. It was a bleeding, broken Heart. It bled for me. Mine are the sins that broke the Heart of the Redeemer, mine the impenitence which pained His Soul. May it be mine now to bring joy to that sacred Heart by the glad service of a surrendered will and the love of a penitent and thankful heart, redeemed by the merits of His holy Passion.

Plead the merits of Christ's precious Blood-shedding.

Jesu, my Lord, Who didst suffer Thyself to be wounded in the house of Thy friends and didst endure the agony of loneliness and the vision of human sin, make me to hate my sin for the love of Thee, Who hast died upon the Cross for me. Thou, Who didst will that Thy precious Side should be pierced and Thy heart wounded with the soldier's lance, forgive me all the sins of a heart impenitent, unstedfast, selfish, unloving and rebellious. Jesu, my Lord, I Thee adore, make me to love Thee more and more.

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XIII

THE CROSS

S. MATTHEW xxvii. 33–50; S. LUKE xxiii. 32–49; S. JOHN xix. 17–37.

THE day was not far advanced when the barrack gates were flung open, and the Roman soldiers began to escort their prisoners to the hill of Calvary outside the city. The narrow streets were thronged with crowds awaiting the issue of the trial. Many were indifferent, many mere curious sightseers, anxious for a good view of an incident so unusual at the Feast. But some had been stirred by the venom of the traders and the priests to real enmity, and were ready to add their curses to the bitter gibes of the crowd. The soldiers cleared a pathway through the pressure of the people. In their midst were the two robbers, and Jesus bearing His Cross. Above the crowd rose the figure of the centurion on his horse, charged with the execution of the Roman governor's decree. Reverently we can imagine the bodily weakness of the Saviour, who, worn with the agony of the scourging and the weariness of the marching to and fro, was now bearing the heavy weight of the Cross.

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Still He bore it until human strength failed, and He fell beneath its weight. With relief the Virgin Mother watched the strong Cyrenian take up the fallen Cross and bear it bravely after her fainting Son.

At length the way of the Cross is traversed—Golgotha is reached. The crosses are laid upon the ground. With ropes and thongs the robbers are bound to their crosses, but greater pains await the Saviour. When Feet and Hands had been nailed to the wood, the Cross of Jesus is raised in the midst and dropped into its socket in the ground. He hangs just above the heads of the people, with His Face turned away from the Holy City, looking out upon the world which He is come to save. He can see the soldiers just at His feet, whiling away the tedious hours with dice, casting lots for the prisoners' clothes. He can hear the taunts of the passers-by, the jeers of the Pharisees, the curses of His fellow-sufferers on either side. He can watch the face of the centurion wondering at His silent conquest over pain. He can see the Virgin Mother and the loved Apostle drawing near, and can look down upon the little band of brave and loving hearts gathered at the foot of His Cross.

To the foot of that Cross we too would come, with Mary, whose stedfast love had never failed, with the Magdalene, in whom erring love had only found at length the blessed object of all true desire, with S. John, whose first true love had faltered at the crisis of his Master's life. With these let us kneel beneath the Cross.

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A.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This very prayer of forgiveness is itself an act of self-oblation. For Jesus knows that the first condition of forgiveness lies in the consummation of His atoning sacrifice. It is through the merits of His precious Passion that He sees the fountain of forgiveness opened to the sin of all the world. Before His dying eyes there rises the picture of mankind renewed in holiness and love. Even now there is a joy set before Him. He sees the victories of the Saints, the sacrifices of unselfish love, the courage of unfaltering devotion, the happiness of lives redeemed, ministries of generous service—all the glorious fruitfulness of the Cross with which the ages shall be blessed.

Forgiveness is the first word in our spiritual life. The first joy that we can give to the sacred Heart of Jesus is to accept fully, unreservedly, faithfully, the absolution which He has won for us by His death. We know the need of forgiveness. We know the way of forgiveness. We know that He has given the priesthood in His Church to be the sure channel of forgiveness. Yet, even when we use that most helpful of all sacramental ministries, how often we miss the very certainty of forgiveness which it is meant to bring! Do we indeed fully realise that the Forgiveness of God is the real and sure putting away of the guilt of those sins of which we earnestly repent? Do we realise that it is the clothing of the soul with the holiness of Christ

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Himself, the reconstitution of all those elements of holiness, which have been wrought in us by Baptism, Confirmation, and all the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit? It is a real and immediate act of God, an act which goes down to the very roots of the personal life. God makes it sure and definite, just because it lies at the very foundation of all spiritual life and happiness. If any sins would seem to be beyond forgiveness, would it not be the sins of those for whom Jesus raised this intercession? The callousness of the soldiers, the hypocrisy of the rulers, the cowardice of Pilate, the malice of Caiaphas, the treachery of Judas, the faithlessness of the disciples. Yet for these He prayed, that He might reveal to us the generosity of the Love of God, Whose heart is ready to save to the uttermost those who come to Him through His Son.

Forgiveness is the first fruit of the Cross, the great gift of God, made possible through the actual oblation of Christ. We have not earned it. We cannot deserve it. It is the supreme instance of God's grace. It needs a heart of humility to accept it, a heart of faith to believe it. It seems too wonderful to be true. We must make such an ardent act of faith in the reality of God's gift, that forgiveness may have room to work effectively in our lives. We must make an act of simple, unquestioning faith which, without looking anxiously about for results, quietly accepts the new life which God has given, and goes on working steadily in the old surroundings with a new spirit and a new hope. In His own time God will justify Himself, and

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we shall be allowed to see the fruit, and perhaps feel the joy, of the forgiveness which has been so surely given.

For God's forgiveness is just the insight of Divine Love. It is Love looking into the life and seeing the possibility of restoration to holiness. God sees what shall one day be the permanent and abiding fruit of holiness in the life. And through our union with Christ, which is restored and perfected by forgiveness, God leads us one step further towards that final perfection which the Divine Love has prepared for us. Forgiveness is not completed sanctification, but it takes away the barriers which prevent growth in holiness, and makes it possible for the grace of the sacraments to work efficaciously in our lives. Forgiveness, then, must be the abiding atmosphere of the Christian life. It is not a rare event, but a condition of daily happiness. Wonderful is the frequency with which God has blessed us with the opportunities of forgiveness. Every service of the Church breathes its own absolution for the simple sins of daily life. No day can pass without the need of forgiveness. The simplest form of the universal faith is incomplete without the words, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." It is an indispensable part of the universal prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses." Let us live daily in the atmosphere of the Divine Forgiveness. It is for this that the Saviour hung upon the Cross, that we might live in that happy consciousness of the Divine pardon which makes each day's work a labour

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of love, takes the sting out of every sorrow and brings hope in the midst of every care.

Make an act of repentance.

O my God, the God of infinite mercy and pardon, long-suffering and full of compassion, I offer to Thee a broken and contrite heart. I grieve for love of Thee. I am truly sorry for all my sins. I plead the merits of Jesus, Who has died upon the Cross, that I might be forgiven. Teach me to love Thee without ceasing, to live in the joy of Thy forgiveness, and henceforth in all things to do Thy holy Will, for Jesus Christ's sake.

B.

"To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." These are the words of welcome to a soul, that in the very hour of death has found its Lord and King. At first as the pains of the Cross overwhelmed them, the two sufferers on either side of Jesus railed on Him and blasphemed. But soon the stupefying draught, which they had received, began to take effect, and their cries were stilled. With dull eyes they gazed upon the Cross of Christ. Out of the mist rose the words of the title above His Head, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," that title which had drawn forth the mocking cry of the priests, "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross and we will believe Him." For one of the dying robbers the title only prolonged the memory of frustrated hopes, and increased the bitterness of a heart now closed by suffering to the appeal of Truth and Holiness and Love. But in the soul of the other,

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pain had begun its hallowing work. Quietly, as his senses returned, his memory recalled the scenes of this last day. He had marked the serene composure of Jesus before Pilate. He had heard the cry "Behold your King." And here upon the Cross he wondered at the noble self-control which conquered the bitterest pains, and uttered no cry, but the cry of royal pardon. Was this a King, then?

He recalled the ambitions of his early youth, when, stirred by the promises of the prophets and galled by the heavy yoke of Roman rule, he had been fired with the hopes of the coming of the Messianic King. A deliverer had arisen. He had answered the call to arms. But the rising had failed. Here was no King. He had returned home. But the excitement of the campaign had left him restless. The lust of war was upon him. He had gone out and taken part in questionable ventures, gradually drifting from crime to crime till now he suffered as a common footpad. But through all those days the old hopes had never left him, the old ideal had never faded. Consciously he had stifled the nobler aim and slowly fallen from vice to vice. And now gazing upon this Face of royal calm and tranquil dignity, he seemed to see the embodiment of all his hopes. Here was sovereignty, here was kingship, here was a leader and prince of men. The silent appeal of Jesus on the Cross won upon his sorrowing heart. Could this be the King, for whom his earliest hopes had looked, for whom his first blow had been struck, his first

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adventure sought? He could yet recall the old Messianic prophecies, and now, under the inspiration of the moment, and out of the very agony of his pain, there flashed forth into new and startling prominence, words hitherto unheeded, hitherto unexplained, which spoke of rejection, suffering, death. Was this the King? It was a hope worth cherishing, a venture of faith that could not be withheld. So with a great courage he stilled the curses of his companion, and threw himself boldly upon the sovereignty of his new-found King. "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." He knew not quite how it might be. He had just the dim consciousness that here was the ideal King, to whom he had first dedicated his life. It was a noble faith. It was the offering of a life's loyalty.

How ready was the acceptance of the Saviour! How royal the answer which He gave to the dying man's surrender! Jesus welcomed the homage. He was indeed the King. That very day should the happiness of service begin for His new subject. To the dying man there seemed but a few moments of lingering consciousness which could be devoted to the service of Christ. But before his wistful gaze Jesus spread the vision of an eternity of service and of fellowship in the world to come. Then should those ideals at length be realised, to which this life had given birth. There "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His Face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads."

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Perhaps as we gaze once more upon the Face of the Crucified, the silent appeal of His Love may win upon us. We may recall those lost ideals of earlier days. Think of those first generous enthusiasms, those pure impulses of affection, that ardent hero-worship, that unselfish devotion. Do they not find in Christ their highest satisfaction? Do we think that they have altogether died away? It is not too late. For this moment Jesus has been waiting. The sense of worthlessness, which the vision of the Crucified brings, is the very sign that we have found our King. The time in this life which we can offer may be short. But this life is not all. If the soul be fully given to Him here, there is eternity for our service, a service of growing happiness and power. Here there will be limitations to our vision, hindrances still to our service, a sense, it may be, of uncertainty in our devotion, a want of joy at times in our fellowship. This must be, for the past brings its inevitable punishment. A noble penitence accepts it loyally, and sees in it something less than "the due reward of our deeds." The dying penitent was not spared any of those last bodily pains that ushered him forgiven into the nearer presence of his King. "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him." So shall we accept the suffering that comes to us in our penitence, for it draws us nearer to Christ. Far surpassing all pain will be the joy of attaining that highest ideal of which our lives are capable in the

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service of our Eternal King. May Jesus from the Cross restore to us the great ideals which we have lost. Here and to all eternity may we find in Him the satisfaction of all our powers of service and of love.

Pray for those in Paradise.

O Lord, the Maker and Redeemer of all believers, grant to the faithful departed all the unsearchable benefits of Thy Son's Passion, that in the day of His appearing they may be manifested as Thy children through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

C.

"Woman, behold thy Son. Son, behold thy Mother." Jesus was not left desolate upon the Cross. It must have been the courageous love of the Virgin Mother, that shamed the beloved Apostle back to open loyalty. She would follow to Calvary. And though he had said no word in the hall of Caiaphas and had shrunk from any acknowledgment of Christ before Pilate, he could not see the Virgin Mother exposed alone to the insults of the crowd. So S. Mary and S. John stood together at the foot of the Cross. And Jesus spoke to comfort them. The most tender thoughtfulness breathed in what He said. For Mary, it was a moment of utter desolation. Life seemed broken indeed. The sword had pierced her heart. The moment had come, for which Jesus had quietly prepared her through three years of ever-widening separation. For three years she had been compelled to stand afar off and watch the growing tragedy of His life. The life, which for

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thirty years had been so near, seemed to have passed beyond her reach.

And now Jesus would find a way by which she might enter into the mysteries of those years and understand the meaning of His work. He would commit her, upon whose breast He lay in the days of His infancy, to the strong care of the beloved Apostle who lay upon His breast in the days of His ministry. The disciple could tell her of the inner secrets of those years which she most longed to know, and she could speak of the sweet intimacies of the home at Nazareth. In tender recollection they would piece together the whole story of His life and find comfort in the growing knowledge of His love.

For S. John, too, the words of Christ show the tenderest thought. In the hour of need even the beloved Apostle had failed. He had fled from the garden of Gethsemane. Unrecognised he had stood silent in the hall of Caiaphas. With what self-loathing shame he must have crept to the foot of the Cross! It was too late now. There can be no remorse like the sorrow of a love suddenly found faithless. What would the dying Master say? Jesus saw into the depths of that loving heart. He knew its torture. It was burning shame such as this, which Jesus had borne in the mysterious agony of Gethsemane, when He felt the burden of all the world's treacheries and sin. Christ read the penitence of that love too shamed for words. This was His word of absolution. As token of His unshaken trust in the beloved disciple,

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as pledge of His pardon, Jesus committed to S. John the most sacred and tender charge which love could give, the care of His Virgin Mother. With what thankfulness, with what wonder the Apostle heard the words of Jesus from the Cross! How bravely and how truly he would fulfil his charge!

The Cross had revealed to the robber his true self. At the Cross, too, the beloved Apostle came to himself when he thus accepted the claims of his Master's love. For Christ knew that He could ask a sacrifice of the disciple's love. The sacrifice of S. John was to abide in seclusion and to tarry till Jesus came. For when, in the first flush of Pentecostal power, the infant Church descended into the arena of the world to wage battle against the enemies of Christ, who would so passionately have sought the forefront of the battle, who would have dealt such eager blows, as this young and enthusiastic "Son of Thunder"? Yet Jesus asked him to stand aside from the open battle. In some secluded spot, apart from the fierce struggle of the Church, he should watch over the last years of the Virgin Mother. Let those who know how love lives on sacrifice, realise how S. John's heart must have leaped to fulfil his dying Lord's request.

And in this legacy to S. John Christ showed His thoughtfulness for the needs of His Church. Surely it was in converse with the holy Mother of Christ that S. John was built up in the truth of the Incarnation. Mary could tell the disciple those inner mysteries which only her own heart knew. And he would

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strengthen her faith with the memories of the loved intercourse of the years of ministry. So when the crisis of the Church was urgent, and in the face of new and insidious foes fresh witness for the truth of the Incarnation was needed, then S. John, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, drawing upon the resources of a memory inspired by passionate affection and quickened by intimate converse with the very Mother of God, gave to the world his Gospel of the Incarnation, which proclaimed with the triumphant note of personal knowledge and conviction the perfect Deity of the crucified Son of Man.

May the spirit of the tender thoughtfulness of Christ come to us from the Cross! To think of others in the midst of our own suffering, to be gentle to the faithlessness of others, to anticipate the loneliness of sorrow, to give to self-convicted, doubting hearts the assurance of unshaken love and trust—what is this but to be made like unto Him, Who in all His suffering thought tenderly for us, leaving us the example of all-sacrificing love?

Make an act of Love.

O my God, I love Thee with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul and with all my strength, because Thou art perfectly good and worthy of all love, and because Thy Son Jesus Christ has died upon the Cross for me. Grant that I may so love my neighbour, even as Thou hast loved me. And I desire for love of Thee to hate and forsake every sin with which I have ever offended Thee, and I resolve by Thy grace to avoid for the future every occasion of sin. Help me, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake.

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D.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The darkness of the sixth hour must have begun to fall as S. Mary and S. John reached the Holy City. For three hours the mid-day sun was veiled. Upon the Temple courts, where the paschal lambs were being slain, upon the palace of Herod, upon the hall of Caiaphas, upon the castle of Pilate, the sudden darkness gathered. For three hours the whole city lay in gloom. Towards the end of the hours of darkness Jesus revealed the agony of His soul in the words of the Psalmist, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" They were spoken that we might know that He suffered the extremest pain that man can ever experience, the agony of a soul that feels itself apart from God. He speaks of the real experience of His Humanity. It is not that there could be in any sense any dereliction of His inherent and eternal Deity. As God He must abide ever and always in unbroken and inseparable fellowship with the Father and the Holy Ghost. But in this extremity of anguish His Humanity felt bereft of the upholding care of God. The truer and more perfect the humanity, the more fully and more constantly it rests upon communion with God. The desertion which Jesus felt was a keener pain than that which our less perfect humanity can feel. We do not always feel the need of God. At our best, we need Him greatly, passionately.

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To all of us, at those very moments when we are at our highest, has come this sense of being apart from God, this want of conscious experience of the Presence of God. It is the sorest trial of the soul. Jesus would have us know how fully He Himself has entered into that reality of human experience. He has sounded the depths of the keenest suffering. There have been those to whom amid the throes of martyrdom God has granted such a keen realisation of Divine communion, that all pangs of bodily pain have been lost in the bliss of spiritual joy. Jesus denied Himself this consolation. He felt the bitter anguish of spiritual darkness. The upholding sense of the Divine Presence which so continually supported His Humanity was withdrawn. We should feel that something was wanting to the fulness of His human experience, if Jesus had not revealed His share in this hardest trial of mankind. It was the last desolation of all that now broke upon Him. He had passed from failure to failure, from desertion to desertion. Nazareth had rejected Him, Galilee had refused Him, Jerusalem had spurned Him, His disciples had forsaken Him, Judas had betrayed Him, S. Peter had denied Him. Yet never a word had He spoken to reveal the agony of His Heart. But now the Father had forsaken Him, and He uttered this cry of desolation.

This is the very desolation which we, too, have felt. It has come at such unexpected moments. Just when we had hoped for the clearest consciousness

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of the Divine Presence, when by sacrifice and devotion we had thought to make the surest preparation that we could, just at the moments of greatest spiritual effort, has come this agony of desertion. Over the soul there steals the chilling cloud of numbness and insensibility. We doubt if God can be, after all, the faithful God, true to all His promises. Then we can recall the experience of Jesus Himself. This desolation is no punishment of sin, it is no real absence of God. Rather it is God's trial of the faithful soul. It is not hard to serve God when we have the joyful sense of union with Him and the uplifting sense of His Presence. But can we serve Him apart from all the helps of spiritual comfort? Can we serve Him out of utter darkness, just because we know that He is our God and we are His people? Can we serve Him just for what He is, not for what He gives?

This is what He asks, and asks from the Cross. This is the opportunity of our faith. At such times we must throw ourselves confidently upon the certainties of the sacramental life. It may be that as we approach the Blessed Sacrament Itself, we have no joyful sense of our Saviour's Presence, and can feel no responsive joy, as we go back to our work strengthened by His Eucharistic grace. But, then, we know, with all the sure conviction of certain faith, that quite apart from all subjective feelings and emotional consciousness, the reality of the Sacramental Gift is sure and stedfast. It is the very

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purpose of the sacramental method, which God has chosen as the means of union between Himself and us, that we should have some stedfast, objective, outward assurance, upon the inviolable certainty of which we can rely. He knew how vague and shifting human emotions would be. In moments of desolation, then, we throw ourselves back upon the sure realities of sacramental grace. It is always "*My* God." There may be no open vision, but there is no real abandonment after all. And when other more accustomed devotions seem to fail, let us go back to the veriest simplicities of prayer, saying with hopeful earnestness the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, using familiar hymns and the simplest forms of devotion that may be real to us, asking the Holy Spirit to voice for us those inward groanings, that we ourselves cannot utter. Indeed, it seems that our Lord Himself upon the Cross made use of the well-known words of the Psalter to express His devotion in the hour of His great need. If, in the days to come, this same trial of faith is offered to us, let us recall the stedfastness and love of Jesus, enduring to the uttermost the agony of spiritual desolation, that in our hour of need we might possess the grace of His Sacraments. And let us see that in the hours of spiritual happiness and fervour, we are not relying upon the emotional comforts and sensible consolations with which God is pleased to refresh us, but rather upon the sure strength of the inviolable Faithfulness of God, which is the source of all sacramental power.

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Make an act of Faith in the certainty of Sacramental Grace.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that Thou art ever faithful and true, and that Thy Grace is ever stedfast and sure. I believe that by Baptism we are surely made the children of God, heirs of everlasting life. I believe that in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar Thou art verily and indeed present. I believe that Thou, my Saviour, true God and true Man, art there with all Thy treasures, to give Thyself to me, to make me partaker of Thy Passion, to give me a pledge of eternal life. Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief.

E.

"I thirst." Jesus experienced that last bodily distress of the dying, the agony of thirst. In simple pity a soldier set a sponge upon a reed and put it to His Lips. Jesus welcomed the act of tender kindliness in the spirit of fellowship in which it was offered. Earlier He had refused to taste the mingled draught, that would have deadened sensibility. He would retain all His powers of feeling to the end. But now He would not refuse this kind impulse of sympathy.

Jesus spoke of His bodily suffering at this last moment, that we might surely know the reality of the pain which He endured in the perfection of His human strength. He uttered no words of complaint. In the moments of direst agony, no syllable of impatience or self-pity had been forced from Him. Sovereign self-control had marked His patient endurance of the keenest pain. But this word is for us—His Blessing upon pain, given from the Cross to tell us that He bore it, that He understands it, that

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He can sanctify it. The bodily suffering which Jesus bore was extreme—the more extreme because of the exquisite sensibility and the enduring strength of His perfect human frame, but it was not the greatest agony that He had to bear. Sorrow for the world's sin meant more to Him of suffering than the intensest bodily pain. For suffering was not in itself evil, but sin was wholly evil—indeed the only evil. The world has dealt with suffering in many different ways. The Stoic said, "Accept it, but disregard it; triumph over it nobly in the strength of a resolute courage, take no account of it, bear it without a murmur, it is beneath regard." The Epicurean said, "Flee from it, it is the bane of life, escape from it at all hazard, it is the grave of all pleasure." To-day there are those who would say, "Suffering is not real. It is the fancy of a diseased mind, a delusion of the brain. Think it away." But Jesus dealt very differently with pain. To Him it was a reality, to be accepted, not indeed as an inevitable evil, not as the negation of all happiness, but as the necessary experience of a humanity that has fallen away from its fellowship with God, an opportunity of endurance, a means of sanctification. It is thus that suffering comes into the Christian life, not as the particular punishment of individual sins, but as part of the common heritage of all mankind. It is indeed the first and last experience of every life, and no man by wealth, or position, or individual gifts can ever put himself beyond its reach. If it has entered into the life of

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the perfect and sinless Man, we can be sure that His blessing will sanctify its every experience in the lives of us His followers.

Pain by itself does not sanctify. Naturally it tends to concentrate thought and attention on self, and to paralyse all the more generous energies of the will. But accepted as a way of discipline, suffering becomes one of the most refining influences in life. They say that in the process of refining silver, the workman watches by the crucible in which the ore is melting. At first as it liquefies, eddies and bubbles and cloudy rings of scum form upon the surface. Gradually the dross disappears, the white metal clears, and the refining is finished when the worker, looking over the edge, sees his face perfectly mirrored in the shining surface. Even so Christ, the Refiner of souls, when the great crucible of pain has yielded its perfect work, may see His own Face reflected in the lives of faithful sufferers. Suffering, borne in any other spirit, makes the heart callous, selfish, petulant, and exacting. It becomes a tragedy instead of a blessing. Pain is surely a call to intenser acts of will, that we may overcome the naturally selfish tendency which it excites. Thus it braces character, and while it gives that tender sympathy and gracious thoughtfulness for others which are such distinctive marks of the Christian life, it leads out to strength and stedfastness of purpose and enriches the whole personality.

But while it is true that suffering may have this happy power over the life, and may bring us nearer to

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Christ, the actual time of suffering is often a period of great spiritual insensibility and of devotional weakness. Illness is seldom the time when we can pray best, or think best. Our bodily and mental powers are disabled. Our spiritual grasp is relaxed. It is the time for simple and earnest faith, when we can throw ourselves very confidently on the known Love of God and rest securely in His everlasting Arms. We cannot safely put off learning the ways of devotion till the days of illness come. It will not be easier, but harder then. But in illness we can put to the test that strenuous faith in God's daily love and guidance, which has kept us happy in the days of health. So it was with Jesus on the Cross. He endured calmly because He had lived each moment in full communion with the Father. In the hour of utmost suffering He displayed the most perfect trust and made the most perfect oblation of His will.

The soul that thus rests upon God in illness, will never lose its thoughtfulness for others in the hour of its own suffering. How often the sickroom becomes the scene of petulance, and petty, peevish discontent! How easily the sick self usurps all interest and thought! But Jesus, in the hour of His pain, thought of others. He accepted the rough but kindly sympathy of the pitiful soldier. It was not much, after all. But it was the evidence of a struggling love. And in our sickness we can learn from the Sufferer on the Cross to be natural and kindly in the acceptance of the sympathy, however simple and awkward, which others offer us.

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And all that they give we must accept graciously and gladly, in the loving spirit in which it is offered, as tributes dear to the Heart of Him Who suffers in us.

Pray for all who suffer.

O God, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, accept my prayers for all those who are in grievous suffering. Grant them the guardianship of Thy holy Angels, the comfort of the Holy Spirit and all things that are needed for health both of body and of soul. And make me ever ready to unite my sufferings to the sufferings of Christ, that I may be sanctified by His Passion, to Thy honour and glory everlastingly.

F.

"It is finished." In these words there breathes the exultation of victory. "He shall see of the travail of His Soul, and be satisfied." Here in this weak Body, here amid these surroundings of shame and suffering has been wrought out the great work of redemption. The loving purpose of God is at length in His own infinite patience achieved. Man, whom He made for Himself, who by disobedience had fallen away from his high destiny, has been brought back into union with God by the offering of the perfect Man.

The perfect example of man is finished. Christ has left us an ideal. He knew our needs. Man wanted a copy, an external example. Within himself he possessed the Divine witness of conscience and of reason. But man was mostly too gross, too ignorant, to discern a witness to God within himself so subtly intertwined with the motions of his own soul. So God

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presented Himself without. In Jesus Christ man saw the incarnate embodiment of that appeal for goodness and for truth that had been made so silently in his inner life. God, Who had revealed Himself thus to the heart and mind of men, now met man face to face, living visibly and outwardly upon earth the life of humiliation, that we might behold the Divine Will actually embodied before our eyes. By this Divine example God extended a silent invitation to men to rise to better things. Christ satisfied the human need of an example. He is the Universal Man. Finished is the story of His earthly life. Study it as we will, the impression left upon us is that of a faultless, perfectly-rounded character, challenging men to convict Him of sin, with a proportion perfectly balanced, at once severe and tender, humble yet imperious and self-confident. He combines in Himself every type of excellence, zealous but ever tranquil, full of activity yet always contemplative, benevolent yet never weak, firm of will yet never obstinate, self-controlled yet never hard nor stoical, conscious always of the vanity of earthly things yet never despising the simplest duty. While He achieved more than any man, He accomplished it by suffering. Thus He has left to us the finished picture of the Universal Man, the product of no one age, of no one race, so universal, so comprehensive that all might feel they have a share in Him.

And in Him was finished the revelation of God. He is not man only. He is God. He has taken that Humanity and wrapped it for ever round His Divine

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Person that He may use it as the means of revealing God to man. God, Who had been so long misunderstood, was revealed as Love and Holiness in the work of Redemption. The Holy One has paid the price of man's freedom, has been our sin-bearer. As Representative of our race He has borne our sin and satisfied the Divine law of Holiness. In some dim figure, we can see how it is possible for Him actually to bear and feel our sin. We can think of the relation of a good and holy mother to the sin of her own loved son. Quite apart from the poverty, the straits of suffering, the public disgrace, to which she may be brought, who can tell the shame and agony that fill her heart? Pure, she must sympathise with the law of Holiness against which her boy has sinned. Loving and akin to him, she cannot cut herself off from her son. So Christ had sympathy with the Divine law. It was His very own, as He was one with the Father in Justice and in Love. And He was one with us in the truth of His Humanity. He had made Himself our Brother. He bore our sin, confessed our sin as if it were His very own, condemning sin in the flesh. Thus upon the Cross did Jesus achieve the mystery of Redemption, winning for those who should be incorporated in Him in the fulness of sacramental union, forgiveness, freedom and glory.

Thus it is finished—example, revelation, redemption. Have we made that example ours? Great as it is and infinitely above us now, yet it is ours to follow. There is a kinship between us and Him. For

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He has stooped to give us of Himself. He has given us His Spirit that we might read aright His story, and seize the meaning of His life. And He has given us Himself, filling our weak lives with the powers of His new Humanity, so that with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

May it not be that we may carry the spirit of Christ's finished and perfect work into our own daily duties? True it is that no work but that of Christ can ever be finished. Yet though our work can never in itself have that completeness, it can be wrought with a thoroughness and perseverance which tend to completion in Christ. Work offered in the name of Christ and carried through in the power of His grace becomes "finished" in Him. Man by himself never achieves. But God achieves in him. And the work which God gives us to do, God's grace will enable us to fulfil. Our work, devoted to God in prayer and in all its stages carried out in the power of the indwelling Spirit, however imperfect it may seem, will never fail of achievement. Under the impulse of the finished work of Christ, we may be moved to new thoroughness, new perfection and enduring perseverance in the work, which He has given us to do day by day to His glory.

Make an act of conformity to the Will of God.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I worship Thee, I give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory. I

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desire in all things to submit myself unto Thee. And I ask the help of Thy Holy Spirit, that I may so love that which Thou hast revealed, that I may be more and more conformed to that which Thou dost will. And what I ask for myself, I ask for all those for whom Thou hast died, that those who sin against Thee may be turned to love Thee, and that those who love Thee may be drawn nearer to Thee, to the glory of the Father.

G.

"Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit." With these words of tranquil confidence Jesus committed Himself in death to the loving Father, Whose Will He had ever fulfilled through all the crises and the temptations of His human life. The joy of His Manhood had been obedience to the Will of the Father. "I do always those things that please Him." The perfect confidence of that trust was never broken. "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." And now the work was finished. Jesus commended His Humanity to the Father for the new experience of death. As in life, so in death, Christ displayed the sovereignty and serenity of the human spirit in perfect communion with God. He felt supreme security at the approach of death, because He placed His ultimate repose upon the eternal Will of God. Death was for His Humanity the opening of a new and quickened fellowship with God. Through death His Humanity should be led to the glory of the Resurrection and the enriched and glorious activities of the Ascended Life before the very Throne of God. "And having said thus, He

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gave up the Ghost." So the willing offering was completed, and the redeeming work of the Incarnate Life was sealed by the redemptive sacrifice of the death of the Sinless, carrying sinful man with Him through the grave and gate of death to the perfect bliss of eternal and holy fellowship with God.

Death is not very far from any of us. Quickly the years pass and we draw nearer to the grave. How shall we be able to meet the call of Death with the serenity of Christ? If we are to commend ourselves confidently to the mercy of the Father then, we must be committing ourselves to His love and guidance now. In the life of Christ, we learn that the secret of the only true human life is to commit ourselves daily into the Father's Hands. Our human nature finds its true peace, its true repose, only in the Will of God. There is no other satisfaction, no other happiness, no other way of safety for human life, than the way of surrender to the Love of God. Day by day, then, we will make fresh act of faith in that Divine Love, and commend to Him our hopes, our fears, our work, our rest, our sufferings and our joys. The morning prayer of self-committal will touch all the moments of the day with confidence in the power of God, and shed over our busiest work the sense of His protecting Presence. As each fresh opportunity of service, each difficulty, each temptation, rises before us, by an immediate act of conscious recollection we will link on the moment of need to the moment of prayer, realise the power of self-committal and gain strength to

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surrender to the Will of God. So shall our lives be moulded into growing conformity to the Divine Will. From step to step we shall be led in the life of self-committal, till Death itself shall have no terrors, for we know it to be the commendation of the soul to the Lord of Life and of Love. There peace shall surround us, there the Angels of God who have led us through life shall be with us, there the soul that has looked daily unto God shall enter upon a fuller vision, and amid all the weakness of bodily dissolution be sustained by the close fellowship of God. So will the peace of this life be crowned in death with the fuller peace of Paradise and the perfect peace of Heaven, where in the bliss of happy obedience all live unto God.

Commend yourself to God, in life and in death.

O Lord Jesus, Who in the hour of Thy death didst commend Thy Soul into the Hands of the loving Father, grant that in life I may so truly commit the keeping of my soul day by day unto Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator, that in the hour of my death I may be sustained by His power, and may receive the benediction of Peace, to Thy honour and glory, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest God for ever and ever.

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XIV

PARADISE

S. MATTHEW xxviii. 57–66; S. LUKE xxiv. 50–56;
1 S. PETER iii. 18–20.

QUIETLY fell the hush of Easter Eve in the first stillness of the early day. No more agony of blood, no turmoil of unrest, no mockeries, no desertion, no cruelties of death now, but the unbroken stillness of the sepulchre, the awed devotion of the Holy Women as they brought the loving tribute of sad hearts, so soon to leap to Easter gladness. And above all, the repose of Christ, the Peace of Paradise. Into that stillness, too, our hearts may enter. Not only do our Lord's own words of royal promise echo to us from the Cross, opening the vision of a life of fuller fellowship with Him in Paradise, but one of His Apostles is allowed partly to draw aside the veil that hides the tireless activities of that spirit-world, into which the Soul of Jesus passed at death.

A.

While the sad followers of our Lord reverently took the dead Body from the Cross and bore It

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tenderly to the new sepulchre which the love of Joseph had dedicated to the Master's use, the soul of Jesus had already sped upon a new activity of loving revelation. In the power of His quickened Manhood Jesus passed to the spirits gathered in the state of waiting after death, and revealed to them the great fact of the Incarnation. He presented Himself as the Incarnate for the worship of Paradise. What must have been the joy of those souls who had passed their earthly lives in the dim twilight of imperfect revelation! How they must have rejoiced to behold the Light of the World, to see their own vague hopes and uncertain prophecies so gloriously fulfilled in this crown of human perfection, this supreme sign of the Divine Love! So Jesus "preached," and Paradise was filled with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ.

The ministry of Christ in Paradise fills us with hope for our own spiritual activities hereafter. Undoubtedly it was in the power of His quickened Manhood, not merely in the power of His Godhead, that Jesus passed to this new ministry. As God, He had been ever present to the souls in Paradise. What was new was the entrance of His perfect human Soul into the conditions of the waiting state. As we contemplate what He then undertook in the completion of His ministry as the God-Man, we see the promise of a new unfolding of human powers in the world to come. This hope becomes a stimulus to deeper consecration here. It explains some of the mysteries of

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earthly discipline. That ministry will be one of profounder spiritual energy than any activity of this life. If we are to be capable of such ministry then, we shall need the discipline of obedience, of suffering, of contemplation now. What an outlet that will be for spiritual forces that seem to find no sufficient opportunity of expression here! In this world are manifold hindrances of social distinction, of local separation, of imperfect knowledge, of necessary work. But there the restraints of time begin to fall away before the advent of eternity. Soul speaks to soul, unhindered by the barriers which the mortal body imposes upon the intimacies of spiritual fellowship. It is the way of Divine condescension, that through the agency of our fellow-men the mysteries of the Incarnation should be revealed to human souls. Surely in the world beyond will be the continuation of that human ministry of soul to soul which, through His Incarnate Son, God has opened to us men. It must be the highest and most blessed of all human activities. May it be ours so to use the grace of God in this life, that we may be yet co-operators with Him in the spiritual ministries of Paradise.

Pray for the Church at rest.

O Eternal God, Who holdest all souls in life, we beseech Thee to send forth upon Thy whole Church the bright beams of Thy light and heavenly comfort, and grant to the souls at rest the abundance of Thy Divine peace, that purified from all stain of sin Thy servants may serve Thee, and may see Thy Face, and with all Thy Saints may come to worship Thee

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in the visible unity of the glorified Body of Thy dear Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, God world without end.

B.

But we have not only a future ministry to hope for, we have a present fellowship to enjoy with those who are departed. As we picture the ministry of Jesus in Paradise, we can realise the way in which the souls respond to the new Presence of the Incarnate which is revealed to them in that world. We thank God for the new revelation of the life of the waiting soul. The Old Testament Scriptures speak so hopelessly of the future life. Psalmist and prophet alike, with all their rich hopefulness of God's mercy and goodness in this life, have no words of comfort to speak of life beyond the grave. For the Jew of the Old Testament there was no conscious intercourse with God after death. Here alone in this life could man enjoy active fellowship with God. At death, man lost his communion with God and his fellows, and God lost the glory of man's praise and service. "Dost Thou show wonders among the dead, or shall the dead rise up again and praise Thee?" "The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee, they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee." "In death no man remembereth Thee, and who will give Thee thanks in the pit?" "Among the dead, like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave, who are out of remembrance and are cut away from Thy hand." Such was the burden

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of gloom and sadness that weighed down the heart of the Old Testament saint, as he looked beyond the horizon of this life. The grave was for him the end of all conscious activity and of all intercourse both with God and man.

In view of a revelation so imperfect and a hope so clouded, how wonderful is the vision of spiritual activity, of new and growing fellowship, which the advent of Christ into Paradise opens before us! He brings light to souls who are seeking new vision. Much they have learned on earth, more waits to be revealed in Paradise. The soul that has yielded to the teaching of the Holy Spirit here, finds new powers of spiritual apprehension there, as all its faculties respond to the quickened impulses of the Holy Ghost. It is still the Comforter Who reveals the things of Jesus and leads the soul onward in growing knowledge of God. Knowledge grows because the soul is purified. Here in this world, by obedience, by suffering, by service, crowned by sacramental ministries of forgiveness, God purifies the soul. But still the soul, even at its holiest, lacks perfect purity. There the life of purgation continues. The Holy Spirit deals wonderfully with the soul, and leads it on through the pains of perfect penitence to the blessed joy of completed sanctification. As the soul grows in holiness, it grows in power of vision, in power of prayer. To see God is to identify oneself with the Divine Will, to be absorbed in the fulfilment of the Divine purposes.

So the souls of the departed become powerful in

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intercession. And over all there broods the spirit of peace, the peace of forgiveness, the peace of inner harmony, the peace of a closer fellowship. For this life of the departed is the life of the Church. It is not a life of separation, but a life of quickened intercourse, a life of corporate power. Their growing sanctity, their fervent prayers, their fuller worship are forces of ever-increasing help and comfort for the whole Body of the Church. The vigour of that life pulses through all the brotherhood of the saints, and calls forth an answering energy of consecration, prayer and service from the Church on earth. It is to such an activity of spiritual life, such a close intercourse between the living and the dead in the fellowship of the Church, that the Ministry of Jesus in Paradise opens the eyes of faith. At the very moment when the disciples of the Saviour were in the deepest gloom upon earth, the souls in Paradise were rejoicing in the revelation of the Incarnate. Had the disciples but known the mysteries of that world, how little would sorrow have oppressed them! We do know. And in the joy of that revelation we must live. We can link our sorrows, our trials, our ignorance, our failures, to the penitence, the prayers, the vision of the souls in Paradise. In the consciousness of that great cloud of witnesses, we can lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

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XV

EASTER FORGIVENESS

S. JOHN xx. 11-23.

"JESUS saith unto her 'Mary.' She turned herself and saith unto Him 'Rabboni,' which is to say, Master." The first human words of welcome to the risen Lord came from the lips of the penitent Magdalene. She it was to whom He showed Himself first after the Resurrection. And of all the Apostles it was the penitent S. Peter, to whom Christ first made Himself known. "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." So penitence ever gains the first vision of Christ in His redeeming glory.

With the coming of Easter there is a danger lest the penitence which has been deepened in Lent should suffer neglect, and fail to become an abiding factor of growing holiness in the life. This would be to lose one of the greatest benefits of the Passion. The Passion surely teaches us to look at penitence, not as a single act, nor as the repetition of single acts, but as an abiding and constant character of the soul. It is a lifelong disposition, which penetrates and purifies all the inner life and gives fragrance and

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sweetness to the whole life of devotion. The penitence which we are able to offer to Jesus at our Easter Eucharist, is an earnest of love, a mark of obedience, and a witness of joy, which every fresh gift of grace will intensify and deepen. The legend tells us that at every cock-crow S. Peter renewed his penitence. So every dawn will find us drawing from the treasury of our penitence a fresh offering of obedience and love, to lay at the feet of the victorious Christ. Penitence is a life, a risen life, not an act.

A.

The Resurrection of Christ is the triumph of Holiness. Thus it becomes the actual ground of forgiveness. For it is the vision of Holiness that reveals both the Love of God and the sinfulness of man. It is not merely the vision of God, but the vision of God as revealed in Christ, that brings true penitence. Experience has shown that apart from the Incarnation the vision of God produces but a weak and inadequate sense of sin. God has seemed too aloof, too transcendent. His stainless purity and awful holiness have appeared too removed from human interest and hope, to touch the consciences of men with any real sense of unworthiness and sin. But in Christ man sees not only the beauty of God, but the ideal of humanity, the triumph of goodness in human life.

Often we complain of our lack of the sense of sin, when we are really mistaking the marks of true

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contrition. The essence of contrition lies not in emotion, but in real energy of holiness, in the active putting away of sin. It is sorrow for God's sake, a sorrow which touches the very depths of our personality and draws every faculty into a new obedience to holiness. It may be keen and poignant at first, but it settles down to become an inner principle of action, penetrating all the life. The sorrow of penitence is in this like every other sorrow. Accepted as the discipline of love, sorrow lays its calm and permanent spell upon the heart. It reveals God in new ways. Men may say that the sorrow has been forgotten and that grief is passed away, but actually it remains as keen and fresh as ever, only it has sunk deeper into the life. So it is with the godly sorrow of repentance. It may have its first high emotions. It may even bring tears. But it is not then at its highest, it is not yet at its best. That first tumult must die away, and then penitence will take on a more permanent form. It will show itself in a calm, clear consciousness of sin, in a gracious humility, a ready acceptance of the Divine forgiveness, a constant dependence upon grace, a vigorous striving after holiness, a growing realisation of God. These are the marks of penitence which Easter has to show. With the forgiveness that Lent has brought, there comes a new consciousness of what sin really means. At the very moment when God forgave the sin, He knew it in its utter reality and horror. Into that vision of sin we pass gradually, as we are led from penitence to penitence. And by the

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mercy of God, we can never see what sin really is, until it has been already forgiven. And then the vision, which might have led us to despair, only magnifies our thankfulness to the eternal Love for His resurrection gift. That is the spirit of our real contrition. It brings a stedfast love, a quiet, happy trust in the Divine forgiveness, even in face of a fuller knowledge of our sin. It brings a constant, humble effort after obedience, even while we are conscious of the growing difficulty of higher ideals. It means the readiness to seek once more the highest, even while the memory of defeat is still upon us, and the certainty of conflict lies close before us.

Contemplate the Easter penitence of S. Peter.

"Lord, Thou knowest all things." Thou knowest the humiliation of my fall, the depth of my treachery, the weakness of my will, the poverty of my love. I cannot see them, as in their reality they lie open to Thy gaze. Yet in the very power of that same insight, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." I dare to assert my trust in Thy forgiveness. Poorly my life may show it, but beneath my broken obedience, beneath the open failure, the flagrant sin, there struggles my love of Thee. And on Thy vision of my poor love rests the undying hope of my forgiveness.

B.

The Resurrection of Christ is the proof that God can meet human penitence with the Divine grace of Forgiveness. The Risen Christ is the source of Power. The risen and glorified Humanity of Christ is the gift by which God enriches and empowers human life. It is the means by which the fruit of the

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Passion is secured to us. If the Passion deepens our penitence, the Resurrection assures us that God can, and will, pardon. For my sin, however great, however aggravated by obstinacy and self-will, there is forgiveness in the Divine Heart, and there is the sacramental pledge of certainty which the Risen Christ provides. Of that forgiveness I must have assurance. That assurance may be granted to some by the secret ministries of the Holy Spirit. But there must be no doubt. And for that reason God has provided sacramental certainty for our pardon. The Risen Lord has left to His Church the Ministry of Absolution, conveying a sure and certain outward pledge of immediate forgiveness. Emphatically, in our Ordination Service, it is the one particular power of the Priesthood which is most expressly described. "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of His Holy Sacraments." Thus the words of the Easter commission given by the Risen Lord to His Apostles in the upper room bear fruit to-day.

This ministry of Forgiveness is one of the Resurrection gifts which it may be ours to claim at the Hands of God. There will be clear signs in our life, which will reveal whether this is the Divine help which we are needing to consummate our penitence,

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and to preserve to us Easter Peace. Is there stagnation in the spiritual life? Have we come to a halt in the progress of the soul? Is there some one sin continually recurring in the life, starting up again and again, not of necessity what the world calls a great sin, but a sin which for us bars the way to all advance in holiness, a sin which seems to rise up perpetually undefeated? Is the soul beset with a cloud of small sins—sinfulness hard to define, but overpowering in the sense of helplessness and hopeless infirmity which it creates? Do we feel that we have not yet exhausted all the possibilities of humiliation? Have we that longing for some spiritual reparation which S. Paul speaks of as indignation, vehement desire, zeal, revenge? Is there a weak and scrupulous morbidity which weighs down the soul with perpetual anxiety, dissipating all its powers with paralysing inability to make a clear judgment upon the life? These would be signs that God the Holy Spirit is leading us to this special sacramental gift, which is such a resurrection for the soul.

So will the burden be taken from us. But not only will there be the relief and the comfort of forgiveness. As the use of this sacramental ministry of reconciliation continues, other blessings show themselves and become fresh motives for making it a habit of our devotional life—progress in holiness, the deepening of desire, clearer insight into sin, growth in the power of the Spirit, the widening of spiritual vision, more generous obedience. The soul yet seeks

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its pardon, but it looks far beyond the mere comfort of forgiveness, towards the perfection of service, the intimacy of a closer fellowship, the deeper consecration of purpose which growing penitence desires. And all that this resurrection life of penitence may mean is sketched for us in the story of S. Peter as we see him after Pentecost, God's chosen leader of the infant Church. The secret of his confidence, his humility, his readiness to endure, his power to serve, was the reality of his penitence and the fulness of the Divine Forgiveness.

C.

Thus Easter forgiveness may be ours, certain and unquestioned. But forgiveness does not do away with punishment. Punishment follows upon sin. It is the inevitable result. To the penitent, punishment comes as a precious opportunity of penance, readily accepted and lovingly borne. Punishment so received becomes a way of sanctification, an inner discipline that bends the soul in the stern ways of happy obedience to God. It is the forgetfulness of this need of punishment that often makes us so impatient with our progress, so dissatisfied with the fruits of our pardon, so ready to turn our backs again upon God. Forgiveness takes away the guilt of past sin. But the power of that repeated sin upon the life has yet to be reckoned with. If the will has been dissipated with long inattention and years of tolerated distraction, the gift of pardon will not suddenly restore unbroken

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powers of concentration in meditation and prayer. Slowly and painfully the will must be regained, and brought to subjection with conscious daily effort, with many a lapse, it may be, many a fall, but always now with the certainty of final triumph in the power of the Spirit. The slowness of our spiritual progress, the dryness of our devotion, the indifference and listlessness, the recurring thoughts of evil, the difficulty of maintaining our high ideals—all these trials in our devotional life after absolution, what are they often but the natural punishment of our old sins? This is not the only interpretation of them. They may be God's specially chosen way of trial and progress, quite apart from the natural result of our past unfaithfulness. But often they are the natural penances of our own sins. Augustine knew what this punishment was. The tenth book of his Confessions reveals the hard, continuous struggle which he was still forced to maintain. Evil clung to him not only in his dreams, but in his prayers. The wounds, he said, were healed, but the scars remained. He felt for many a year the reaction and after-working of the evil which bad habits had induced. Nightly dreams disturbed him with temptations which in his waking hours he had conquered.

Thus forgiveness pledges us to a long struggle, to a continued effort, to perseverance in a higher ideal. And sometimes we lose hope because we forget this. Is it any wonder that our progress is slow, that the struggle is hard, when we remember what we have

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been? Here is the test of our humility. Are we humble enough to accept this slow advance, this wearisome, repeated conflict, as the natural penance of our sins? It is not a sign that God has forgotten us, nor that His forgiveness has failed, nor that His pardon has proved unavailing. But it is just the natural punishment which we ourselves have earned, and which God in His mercy allows us to work out. This we will remember in our progress after Easter. The life after Easter is not really easier, but harder than it has been in Lent, because it is nearer to God. "Near to the Lord, near to the fire" is one of the old sayings attributed to Christ Himself. Let us not be dispirited, if our advance be slower than we had hoped. We can, indeed, set no bounds to the gracious power of the indwelling Spirit. But in all humility we shall be ready to understand how much we yet lack of that faithful readiness to respond, that perpetual desire to co-operate, which alone can make speedier progress possible. Only day by day we shall renew our hope. Day by day we shall reset our purpose "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure. Be strong, and He shall comfort thy heart, and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

Thus penitence will be the spirit of our risen life in Christ. As we draw near to death and the glories of the resurrection dawn upon us, penitence will win upon us more and more. It was to the penitential Psalms, pinned upon the wall of his room, that S. Augustine turned his dying eyes. "Jesu, mercy!" is

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the cry of the human heart as the light of Easter breaks. For penitence is love. The joy of Paradise will be its perfect penitence, crowning with purifying bliss all the repentant efforts of this imperfect life. The happiness of the eternal Easter will be the vision of consummate holiness, mirrored for the penitent soul in the Face of the risen and glorified Saviour, the King of Love and Lord of Life.

Pray for renewal of life.

O Blessed Spirit, God of love, Thou Promise of the Father, we wait for Thy loving-kindness to renew our gifts, to strengthen us against sin, against the love of self, and the pride of the world. Reveal to our souls the Love of Jesus, and kindle in our hearts such a ready response of love, that remembering the good pleasure of the Father for us and the power of Thy indwelling, we may be found faithful to our vocation and true to Thy holy inspirations, O Lord, Thou Giver of Life.

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XVI

EASTER FELLOWSHIP

S. LUKE xxiv. 13–35.

THE Risen Lord is our Companion by the way. That is the meaning of the walk to Emmaus, which S. Luke records. The risen life is never a lonely one.

A.

"Two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs, and they talked together of all these things which had happened." We can sympathise so thoroughly with their sadness and understand so fully their impatience. They were turning their backs upon Jerusalem, the city of their hopes, in blank despair. Jesus had promised so much. It seemed that He had failed. The third day had come and they had not seen Him. They had ventured so much. They were sure it had been He who should have redeemed Israel. But here was no redemption. They talked to one another sadly enough of their disappointment as they returned to a desolate home.

We ourselves so often reproduce that picture. Is

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it not so with us even at Eastertide? We had hoped so much of what this Lent should bring forth. In our own life we looked for such progress, and there are so many failures. Still the old difficulties remain. There is so little sense of deliverance. In our friends we looked for such happiness and such help, and there has been the unexpected illness, the inexplicable misunderstanding, the continued discouragement. In the Church we looked for such signs of the working of God's grace. And there has been such a lack of public witness, such lamentable evidence of the power of Satan and of the growth of sin. We are ready to turn our backs upon the Holy City. We thought it had been He who should have redeemed Israel. But there is no redemption, no sense of fellowship, no sign of power. We talk to one another sadly about it. Once there had been no hope. But Jesus has come into our life and roused us to such high ventures and made us glow with such a sense of nearness, and led us out to such sacrifices—and then, after all, we find ourselves deceived. We are prepared to give up and go back to the empty, dark, and desolated home of the past. How well we know that mood of impatience, that overwhelming sense of failure!

And then at the very moment of sadness Jesus Himself joins us. We know not that it is He. We open our hearts to our Companion and tell Him frankly of our disappointment. He longs to hear. He never interrupts. He hears us to the end. The very outpouring of our souls in such simple confidence

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is the beginning of better things. So Jesus listens to us in our sorrow. He asks for our confidence now, as He did on that Emmaus road. Jesus listens as we pray. What an incentive to a simpler habit of prayer! We speak into the listening ear of the Divine Companion Who walks with us along the way of life. How real, how natural, how frank must be the language of our prayers! We can trust Jesus to understand. The great thing is really to want to tell Him.

B.

Jesus listens that He Himself may speak. When the disciples had finished their story, Jesus began to teach. He took them just as they were, and began to build upon what was real and true to them. He took them back to the old prophecies on which their hope still rested. As He spoke, new light sparkled and flashed upon those mysterious words in which the sufferings of Messiah had been hinted. There was a depth of meaning there, which had not yet been fathomed. Ought not, then, the Christ to have suffered these things and so to have entered into His glory? Thus faith once more revived in the hearts of the disciples. Their hearts began to burn, as Jesus opened to them the scriptures which they loved.

It is so with ourselves also. Jesus listens, that He may speak. He takes us just where we are. Our faith has received a shock. We hardly know whom or what to trust. A friend has failed us. New learning

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has discredited what we had believed to be true. Uncertainty threatens to declare itself where all had seemed so stedfast and so sure. Unexpected, undeserved trouble has fallen upon us. We tell it all to Jesus. And He takes us back to the one thing which is true to us, the one friend whom we still trust, the one fact of life which we do understand, the one simple truth we can still confess. And upon that He builds. He shows us how much more is implied in the acceptance of that one truth than we had ever thought. Gradually upon that one rock of certainty He builds up the structure of a fuller faith. Upon reality He can always build. We need just the courage to be real, the readiness to accept the full consequences of what we do believe, the faith to push to its logical sequel the truth which we have been able to understand. So Jesus teaches and our faith returns.

C.

And now the way is prepared for a new revelation of Jesus. Faith had returned as the disciples listened to His glowing words, and when He would pass on, they constrained Him to stay. Assuredly but for that loving constraint, He had not stayed. Then in the wonder of that homely meal, as He took the bread in His pierced Hands and blessed it in the familiar way, He was made known to them. He stood revealed as Jesus. And even in the very moment of recognition He vanished from their sight. It was enough. Jesus was alive. Jesus was with them,

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unseen but ever present. Their faith was strong enough now to receive the truth of His invisible Companionship. Through the gathering darkness of the night, the disciples returned alone to bear their joyful news to the Apostles at Jerusalem, whom they had left in such despair.

So is it this Easter with us. Jesus is ever leading us on, out of sorrow and sadness and despair, to a fresh revelation of Himself. We are sad. We tell Him our sorrows. We receive His teaching. We constrain Him to abide. He reveals Himself to us anew. We make known the revelation to others. That is the oft-repeated cycle of our own experience. We constrain Him, by prayer, by obedience, by love. He reveals Himself, it may be, in that Breaking of the Bread which is our Eucharist. Each Eucharistic preparation is just an Easter walk with our Lord along the Emmaus road, leading from darkness to light, from disappointment to hope, from loneliness to the sense of the Divine Companionship. The revelation, which Jesus makes, overflows the life and brings its message of joy to others through us. So the world, with its aching search after happiness, will take knowledge that we have been with Jesus, and are with Him continually in all the manifold experiences of life, ever finding inexhaustible comfort and strength in the companionship of our risen Lord.

Pray for Perseverance.

O Lord and Risen Saviour, grant that going onward from glory to glory, I may learn more and more perfectly to love and

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praise Thee. Going onward from strength to strength in the joy of Thy Companionship, refreshed anew with the grace of Thy sacramental gifts, I beseech Thee, O Lord, to grant me the fulness of Thy love. Direct my way aright, establish me with Thy free Spirit and bring me to the bliss of Thy heavenly kingdom, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, God for ever and ever.

THE END

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